

Some Lessons From Job



SABBATH—DECEMBER 24

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: 2 Corinthians 5:7; Job 1–Job 2:8; Matthew 4:10; Matthew 13:39; John 8:1–11; Hebrews 11:10; Hebrews 4:15.

MEMORY VERSE: “As you know, we think that people who don’t [do not] give up are blessed. You have heard that Job was patient. And you have seen what the Lord finally did for him. The Lord is full of tender [gentle] mercy and loving concern” (James 5:11, NIV).

WE HAVE COME TO THE END of this quarter’s study on Job. We have covered much in the book. But we must admit that there is still so much more to cover, so much more to learn. Of course, even in this world, everything we learn and discover simply leads to more things to learn and to discover. And if it is like that with atoms, stars, jellyfish, and math equations,¹ how much more so with the Word of God (the Bible)?

“We have no reason to doubt God’s Word just because we cannot understand the mysteries of His leading. The natural world is always filled with wonders beyond our understanding. Should we then be surprised to find in the spiritual world also mysteries that we cannot understand? The difficulty is because of the weakness and narrowness [limits] of the human mind.”
—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Education*, page 170.

Yes, mysteries remain, especially in a book like Job. It raises many of life’s most difficult questions. This week, we will look at some lessons we can learn from this story that can help us, like Job, to be faithful to the Lord in a world filled with trouble and suffering.

DEFINITIONS

1. equations—in mathematics, a statement that two expressions (symbols or combinations of symbols and signs that show a quantity or a process) are equal (such as $8 + 3 = 11$ or $2x - 3 = 7$).

BY FAITH AND NOT BY SEEING (2 Corinthians 5:7)

Read 2 Corinthians 5:7 and 2 Corinthians 4:18. What crucial truths are shown in these verses? How can those truths help us to be faithful followers of the Lord?

The discussion surrounding 2 Corinthians 4:18 is talking about the end times. The study of end-time events is known as eschatology.² The verse points forward to the future when Jesus comes back and makes His people immortal.³ This great promise has not yet been fulfilled. So we have to take this promise by faith, because it has not come to pass yet.

Likewise, the book of Job shows us that there is so much more to the world than what we can see. But this fact should not be so difficult to understand for us who are living in this day and age. Science has made known the many unseen things of nature.

A preacher stood before a church in a large city. He asked his members for total quiet. For a few seconds there was no sound. He then pulled out a radio and turned it on. He ran the dial across the channels. All sorts of sounds came out of the radio.

Then the pastor said, “Let me ask, Where did these sounds come from? Did they start in the radio itself? No, these sounds were in the air all around us as radio waves. These waves were just as real as my voice is now. But the way we are wired, we do not see them, nor can we touch them. But the fact that we cannot see or feel or hear them does not mean that they are not around, right?”

What are other real things that we cannot see (such as radiation⁴ or gravity) but that are around us? What spiritual lessons can we learn from the fact that these unseen things are around us and can influence our lives?

DEFINITIONS

2. eschatology—the study concerned with final events in the history of the world.

3. immortal—cannot age; living forever.

4. radiation—energy that comes from a source in the form of waves or rays you cannot see.

As the book of Job shows, none of the people involved really understand what is going on. They believe in God. They also have some understanding about God and His character (thoughts; feelings; actions) and creative power. They can see the terrible troubles and suffering Job is going through. But they do not have a clue as to what really is happening behind the scenes. In the same way, we might not know much about the unseen world around us. So the book of Job teaches us that we need to learn to live by faith. We need to understand our weakness and just how little we really see and know.

EVIL BEING (PERSON) (Job 1:1–Job 2:8)

One of the great questions that has challenged human thinking deals with evil. Some philosophers⁵ and even some who believe deeply in religion have denied that evil is real. They think we should at least stop using the word *evil*. But most people would disagree. Evil is real. It is a part of this world. We can argue over what is or is not evil. But most of us “know it when we see it,” to quote what a United States Supreme Court justice said in another situation.

Evil is sometimes put into two broad classes: natural evil and moral evil.⁶ Natural evil is the kind that happens in nature, such as when earthquakes or floods or diseases bring suffering. Moral evil results from the deliberate (done on purpose) actions of other human beings to do wrong, such as murder or robbery.

All kinds of theories try to explain why there is evil. As Seventh-day Adventists, we believe that the Bible teaches that evil started with the fall of a created being (person), Satan. But many others have denied the idea Satan. They refuse to accept what the Bible clearly says about Satan as a real being, who tries to harm humans as much as possible.

This truth especially is made clear in the book of Job.

Read Job 1:1 to Job 2:8. How do these two chapters help us to identify the work of Satan in the evil that has spread all around the world?

In Job’s case, Satan is directly responsible for the evil, both moral and natural, that happens to Job. But the book of Job does not teach that every example of evil or suffering is due to the work of demons. As with the characters in the book of Job, we, too, just do not know all the reasons for the terrible things that happen. In fact, the name “Satan” never even comes up in the discussions about all the bad things that happen to Job. The speakers (Job’s friends) blame God, they blame Job, but never Satan himself. No matter what, though, the book of Job should show us who is responsible, in the end, for the evil on the earth.

Read Revelation 12:12; Matthew 4:10; Matthew 13:39; Luke 8:12; Luke 13:16; Luke 22:3, 31; Acts 5:3; and 1 Peter 5:8. What do these verses tell us about how real Satan is? More important, what examples do you have of Satan’s influence in your life? How can you be protected against him?



Satan is a real being, trying to harm humans as much as possible.

DEFINITIONS

5. philosophers—persons who study ideas about knowledge, truth, and the nature and meaning of life.

6. moral evil—having to do with choosing wrong and evil over right and good.

WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE . . . (John 8:1–11)



What Job and the woman caught in adultery needed is what all suffering people need: God's grace and forgiveness.

DEFINITIONS

7. motives—reasons for doing something; purpose.

8. grace—God's gift of mercy and forgiveness that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

All through the book of Job, the three (and then four) men who come to speak to Job do so with good motives.⁷ They have heard what has happened to Job. And they come “to mourn with him and to comfort him” (Job 2:11). Job is the first to speak, saying how unhappy he is about the terrible events that have happened to him. But his friends feel it is more important for them to scold Job by “setting his religion right” than it is to encourage and uplift the spirits of their suffering friend.

Time after time, they get it all wrong. But suppose they were right? Suppose all these things came upon Job because he deserved them? His friends might have been right about religious beliefs, but so what? Does Job need correct religion? Or does he need something else completely?

Read John 8:1–11. What does Jesus show here that Job's friends do not have?

In this story, there is a big difference between the woman taken in adultery and those who accuse (blame) her, and Job and those who accuse (blame) him. The woman is guilty. She might have been less guilty of sin than those who accuse her. But there is never a question of her guilt. Job is not guilty of what his friends accuse him of. But suppose Job had been guilty as had this woman. If so, then what Job needed from these men is what this woman needed, and what all suffering people need: God's grace⁸ and forgiveness.

“Jesus pardoned this woman and encouraged her to live a better life. By this act of pardon the character [thoughts; feelings; actions] of Jesus shines forth in the beauty of perfect righteousness [holy life]. While He does not make light of sin, nor lessen the sense of guilt, He does not try to criticize, but to save. The world looked down on this woman of sin with scorn. But Jesus speaks to her words of comfort and hope.”
—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 462.

What the book of Job should teach us is that we need to give others what we would like to receive if we were in their shoes. There is surely a time and place for rebuke (scolding). But before we rebuke anyone for doing wrong, we need to remember humbly that we are sinners ourselves.

How can we learn to have more mercy for those who are suffering, even suffering from their own wrong actions?

MORE THAN THORNS AND THISTLES⁹ (Genesis 3:16–24)

We all know that life is hard. Right at Eden, after the Fall, we were given some hints of how hard it would be. For example, the Lord let our first parents know what some of the results of their sin would be (read Genesis 3:16–24). But these were just hints. If the only challenges we faced in life were “thorns and thistles,” human life would be very different from how it is today.

We look around and see much suffering, sickness, poverty, war, crime, depression (deep sadness), pollution, and injustice. The historian Herodotus¹⁰ wrote about a culture in which people mourned (were sad) when a baby was born. They mourned because they knew the unavoidable sorrow and suffering that the child would face if he or she were to reach adulthood. Seems terrible, but who can argue with this reasoning?

But in the book of Job, there is a message of hope for us about the human condition. As we learned, Job is a symbol of all people who suffer. We suffer often in ways that just do not seem fair for whatever sins we have done. Such suffering is not fair to Job, and it is not fair to us.

What the book of Job can say to us is that God is there, God knows, and God promises that our suffering does not all have to be for nothing.

Secular¹¹ writers and those who do not believe in God struggle to understand the meaninglessness of a life that ends forever in death. They struggle and struggle for answers and still come up with nothing. This life, in and of itself, offers nothing. There is an unbeliever’s philosophy¹² called “nihilism,”¹³ from a Latin word, *nihil*, which means “nothing.” Nihilism teaches that our world and our lives in the world mean nothing.

But the book of Job points us to a God in heaven beyond the *nihil*, or nothing, that our lives threaten to one day become. The book of Job points us to God and to the hope of life in heaven. It tells us that all that happens to us does not happen in a vacuum (an empty space). Instead, there is a God who knows all about what is happening. He promises to make it all right one day. Whatever grand (important) questions the book of Job leaves unanswered, it does not leave us with nothing in our hands but the ashes of our lives (read Genesis 3:19; Job 2:8). Instead, it leaves us with the hope of hopes.

Share your favorite Bible verses that clearly say that we have a great hope that goes beyond anything this world offers. (Read, for example, Hebrews 11:10; Revelation 21:2.)



The book of Job points us to God and to the hope of life in heaven.

DEFINITIONS

9. thistles—wild plants that have sharp points on their leaves and purple, yellow, or white flowers.

10. Herodotus—a Greek historian who lived sometime between 484 B.C. and 420 B.C.

11. secular—not spiritual, not religious.

12. philosophy—the study of ideas about knowledge, truth, and the nature and meaning of life.

13. nihilism—the belief that traditional morals (beliefs about what is right and wrong), ideas, and beliefs have no value. Nihilism is also the belief that a society’s political and social institutions are so bad that they should be destroyed.

JESUS AND JOB (1 John 2:1)



Jesus, like Job, faced false charges (blame for wrongdoing).

Bible students through the ages have tried to find things in the story of Job that are also in the story of Jesus. Job is not exactly a “type [symbol]” of Jesus (as were the animals in the system of sacrifices). But there are some interesting comparisons. In these comparisons we can learn another lesson from Job: what our salvation cost the Lord.

Compare¹⁴ Job 1:1 with 1 John 2:1; James 5:6; and Acts 3:14. What is the same in each of these verses?

Read Matthew 4:1–11. In what ways are Jesus and Job like each other?

Read Matthew 26:61; Luke 11:15, 16; and John 18:30. These verses describe the troubles and false charges (blame for wrongdoing) that Jesus experienced. How does the experience of Jesus we read about in these verses compare with the experience of Job?

Compare Job 1:22 with Hebrews 4:15. How are the two verses the same?

These verses do show interesting comparisons between the experiences of Job and Jesus. Job, of course, is not sinless, but Jesus is. Job is a faithful and righteous (holy) man whose life brings glory (praise and honor) to the Father. Job is tempted¹⁵ by the devil, as Jesus was. All through the book of Job, Job is accused (blamed) falsely. Jesus, too, faces false charges.

Finally, and perhaps most important, no matter what happens, Job stays faithful to the Lord. Much more in our favor, Jesus stays faithful too. Many things happen to Jesus. But He lives a sinless life. It is a life that perfectly represents the character of God. Jesus is the “exact likeness of God’s being” (Hebrews 1:3, NIV). He alone has the righteousness (holy life) needed for salvation. “We are made right with God by putting our faith in Jesus Christ. That happens to all who believe. It is no different for the Jews than for anyone else” (Romans 3:22, NIV).

Job might have gone through much. But his suffering and his faithfulness during the suffering are a small and imperfect example of what Jesus, his Savior, would face for Job’s sake, and for ours too. Jesus surely will come, and “in the end he [Jesus] will stand on the earth” (Job 19:25, NIV).

DEFINITIONS

14. compare—to show how two or more things are the same or different.

15. tempted—to feel the desire to sin.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Through the centuries, the book of Job has thrilled, taught, and challenged readers in Judaism, Christianity, and even Islam. (Islam has its own version of the Bible story of Job.) We say *challenged* because the book leaves many questions unanswered. On one level, this should not be so surprising. After all, from Genesis to Revelation, what book of the Bible does not leave questions unanswered? Even taken as a whole, the Bible does not answer every issue that it brings up. Of the topics it covers, the fall of humans and the plan of salvation are subjects that we will be studying throughout eternity (read *The Great Controversy [War Between Christ and Satan]*, page 678). So how could one little book of the Bible answer everything for us now?

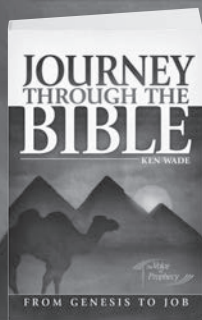
But the book of Job does not stand alone. It is part of a much greater picture shown in the Word of God. And as part of a great spiritual picture, it gives a powerful message to all the followers of God. And that message is: faithfulness during hardships. Job is a living example of Jesus' own words: " 'But the one who stands firm [strong] to the end will be saved' " (Matthew 24:13, NIV). What believer in Jesus, seeking to do right, has not at times faced terrible wrong? What believer in Jesus, trying to be faithful, has not faced challenges to his or her faith? What believer in Jesus, wanting comfort, has been blamed instead? Still, the book of Job presents us with an example of someone who faced all this but kept his faith strong. By faith and by grace we trust in the One who died on the cross for Job and for us. And the message to us is, " 'Go and do likewise [the same]' " (Luke 10:37, NKJV). In other words, God encourages us to have faith and trust in His Son, as Job did.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

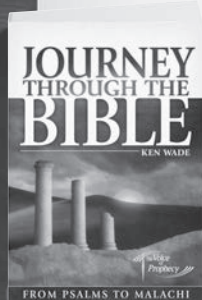
- 1 Place yourself in the mind of a Jew who, knowing the book of Job, lived before the coming of Jesus. What questions do you think that person might have that we today, living after Jesus, do not have? That is, how does the story of Jesus and what He has done for us help us to better understand the book of Job?
- 2 When you get to meet Job, what might be the first question you ask him? And why?
- 3 What are some questions and issues that the book of Job touches on that we did not cover in this quarter?
- 4 What is the main spiritual lesson that you get from this study on Job? Share your answers with your class.

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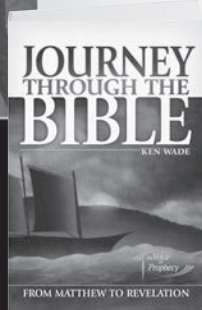
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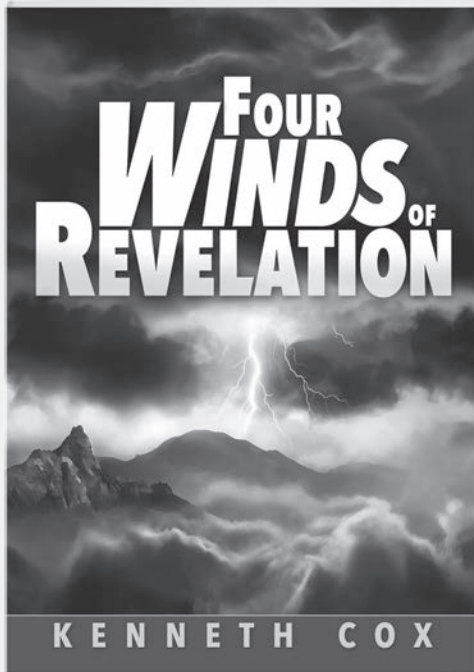


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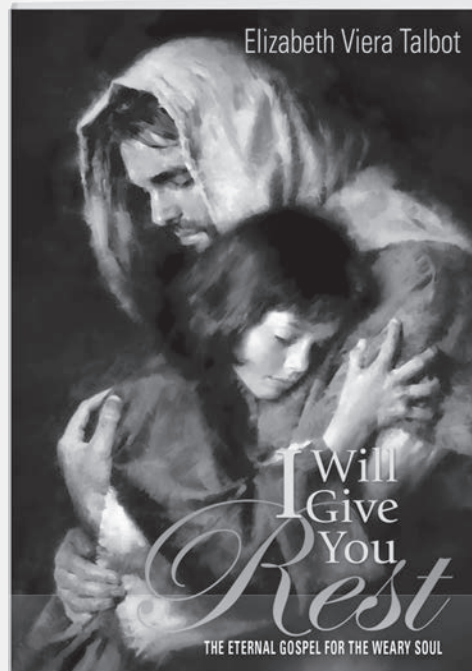


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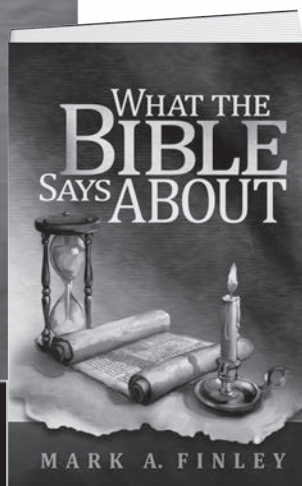
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