

Study 2 - Job - "The Companions of Job," by Neville Clark

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Reading Job 4

We are now in the second section of the book. We began here, basically, with the discussion between Yahweh and Satan and now what we are going to do in this session is consider this whole section here between Job and his friends from the point of view of the three friends.

In this evenings session, I will consider the same section here again, but from the point of view of Job.

If you had to try to put together an explanation of how all of this went, you could just start at Ch 4, for example, with Eliphaz' first speech and start turning the pages and go through all of those chapters, but if you have ever done the readings in the book of Job, after a week of going through these speeches, you start to lose track of where you are and what's the argument and what is the point of the repetition and so forth. So it is in fact more fruitful for me to explain what the arguments are of each of the friends, show how they are similar to each other and show how they are different to each other, and in a separate session, come back and then show how the argument of Job runs also through that. That's why we are going to take that particular approach.

But what you can see, is that for our purposes today Ch 3 to Ch 31, we've got 28 odd chapters in this section. If you just restrict it to the discussion with the friends, there are maybe 24 chapters in this section, so it is the lion's share, really of the entire book of Job in this argument, although I think you will see as we go through it, whilst we are considering a large section, and obviously aren't going to be considering every verse, we are not going to miss a lot, because there is a lot of repetition in what the friends say.

Let's begin at the bottom end of Ch 2, where we meet these three friends of Job as they come to see him. V 11 of Job Ch 2, "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, Bildad the Shuhite, Zophar the Naamathite for they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him.

Now the Septuagint version of this is interesting. Here are these three friends, Zophar, Eliphaz and Bildad. Elihu is going to turn up later in Ch 32, but in the meantime it is these three friends and Job who are going to commune in the discussions that will happen in the next 20-odd chapters.

In v 11 of Ch 2. It says here in the AV, Eliphaz the Temanite, but the Septuagint says, Eliphaz the King of the Temanites. Bildad the sovereign of the Shuchiy or the Shuhites, Zophar the Na'amathi of the

Naamathites, and the point is, of course, as you remember, these are very possibly some of the Dukes of Edom, Gen 36:31. There were Kings in Edom before there was any King in Israel, and the land of Uz we found is in Edom, so it is very likely, certainly in the case of Eliphaz and Zophar, these may well have been some of the Dukes of Edom who are spoken about in Gen 36. The point is that these appear to have been men of some status. These are successful men, these are eloquent men, men of means, probably not entirely dissimilar to Job himself, very possibly trading partners of Job's. So as things began to go bad for Job they would have known pretty quickly that Job's carts stop turning up at their depots. The other thing of course, is that there is no question that these brethren are in the Truth and that the Truth is the most important thing in their lives. Now whatever you think about Job's three friends, and they did make a bit of a mess of things at times, there is no question that their intentions were good and that they were in the Truth, they understood the Truth, so although they didn't get the right answer, they were sincere.

The other major point to appreciate here, brothers and sisters, regarding this section of the book of Job particularly, this section of the book is not an inspired debate, it is an inspired record of a debate. Now there is a difference, you see. This is not an inspired debate, it is an inspired record of a debate, and the point is that there are doctrinal errors in some of what the friends say. But what they said is recorded under inspiration, it is recorded accurately, but not everything they say is accurate, so be careful when you quote the book of Job in public lectures. If you are going to quote Eliphaz in public lectures, just be careful of Eliphaz' doctrine is right as far as the BASF is concerned, because it may not be, because Eliphaz is not inspired, so remember that.

True brethren, no question and there is no doubt that they were true friends. They came from a long way to come and see Job, travelled some considerable distance, probably something like 100-odd miles each. Now look I am labouring this point that they were friends, come with me to Ch 19. These three were friends when many other people weren't friends. Ch 19:13, and have a look at this. If you've got a coloured pencils, you might like to colour in a few key words as I go through here. Look at this in Ch 19:13, "He has put my brethren far from me," now here is Job lamenting the situation that he finds himself in once the suffering begins. "He has put my brethren far from me." "Mine acquaintance are estranged," so there are two groups of people there straight away. "My kinsfolk," v 14 "have failed," "My familiar friends have forgotten me" "they that dwell in my house," these are guests, "my maids," count me a stranger, I am an alien in their sight, "I called my servant and he gave me no answer," "I entreated him with my mouth," "my breath was strange to my wife, though I entreated for the children's sake of mine own body," "Yea, young children despise me." "All my inward friends abhorred me and they whom I loved turned against me." These are all the fair-weather friends of Job. Everybody left him, you see, once the suffering began. You think that's bad?" Come across to Ch 42 and I will show you something most interesting. Ch 42:11, It is all about friends, and Job's friends and who was and who wasn't.

Look at this in v 11 of Job Ch 42, After everything is completed, after Job has been restored, he's got his health back, he's got his wealth back, look at v 11 of Ch 42, "Then came unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they who 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 Yahweh had done to him. Well, thanks for coming. You might say 'better late than never.'" Let me tell you, these three friends, they come straight away, the family didn't come straight away The list of acquaintances of Ch 19 didn't want anything to do with him, these three come and sit down with him to weep with him, so whatever you think about what they said, they were friends. They loved the Truth, they loved Job, they didn't help him very much in the way they intended to but there is no question about their sincerity. When you look at the other people Job had around him and what they could have done, and what they didn't do .

All right, back to Ch 2. Well, they come to Job, and they come to comfort him. He's an outcast from society, he is estranged from everybody, that does not worry them, they are not concerned by Job's reputation, they are not concerned about the stigma that might attach to them now, they were his friends, so they come to see him. In v 13 of Ch 2 it says, that "they sat with him upon the ground, seven days and seven nights. None spake a word unto him because they saw that his grief was very great." You see, there is no need for

conversation here, far too early to think about giving Job answers. So they sat down there with him, tears in their eyes, v 12 says, clothing rent, dust on their heads, and they waited, they just sit there for a whole week, and they wait, because until Job is ready to talk, no one is going to say anything.

But of course, there's a problem, I mean, you realise pretty quickly as you start to read the arguments of the friends, they've talked to each other. And it may be that when Job goes to sleep at night they stay up and they rehearse back and forth what the issue is, what's happening here, what the problem is, what they are going to say, because their arguments are remarkably similar.

And they have a problem, and here's the problem, they believe the doctrine of "exact retribution." Now this is not a doctrine that Christians would believe, officially, but it is a doctrine that we often believe naturally. They believed a syllogism, a syllogism is a logical argument in three propositions, two premises and a conclusion that follows from them. Well what does that mean? Well it means this, you make two statements and the third statement is a conclusion. Here's the first statement that the friends believed.

No 1, All suffering is a punishment for sin, they believed that. They believed that only sinners suffer.

No 2, Job was a great sufferer, no question about that.

The conclusion therefore?

Job was a great sinner. You see? That's the syllogism, that's what they believed, and this is what we call the "doctrine of exact retribution." That is to say, that God rewards you immediately for the things that you do in this life whether they are good or they are bad.

So if you are blessed in life, you must be going well in the Truth. If you lose your money and your family and so forth and you lose your health, well, obviously you are not blessed by God, you are not going well in the Truth, that's the conclusion.

Now that's not true, clearly that's not true.

Why was Job suffering? Because of a discussion with Satan, nothing to do with Job's lifestyle, it is all about the discussion with Satan, but nobody knows that in this argument, so they believe this. So you can see straight away that these three friends have come to Job and they are going to try and help Job and they are going to try to comfort Job, they think Job's going to die, Job himself thinks he's going to die, Job WANTS to die, so they have got a small window of opportunity now to try to get Job to repent so he can still be in the kingdom of God.

These three friends have now come to Job to try to help him, they can't save him physically it appears as though he's got days to live, but they are going to do whatever they can, so they are going to be pretty serious about trying to convert this wayward brother so they don't have much time, you see, because they believe this doctrine which is not true. So you can see why they are going to take a pretty aggressive position on trying to get Job to confess what obviously his secret sins are that Job's been committing, because from all external appearances he looks to be a model Christadelphian, he looks to be the most spiritual brother alive in the world at this time. Obviously he is not because he is suffering and they believe, incorrectly believe, only sinners suffer.

So you can see the point of view that the friends are going to come to this from. Now I say this is not what we officially believe, but what we naturally believe. Why is that? Well, here's John 9, look, many hundreds of years later Jesus to his disciples. They come to him and say, "Master, who did sin, this man, this is the story of the blind man in John 9, who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind? Jesus says, neither this man sinned nor his parents." He's suffering, but it is not because he sinned and it is not because his parents sinned, it is so that the Truth can be taught that is why he is born blind. Or the tower that fell upon those people and killed 18, were they any greater sinners than all the rest in Galilee? No, they were not, they were just the unlucky people who were hit by a tower that fell down, Christ says.

So "Exact Retribution" is not true.

God doesn't immediately reward us with good or evil according to our conduct. He may, but he generally doesn't. Judgment will come one day, but these fellows believed that is how things are. And that is therefore, how they are going to approach Job. Very easy to interpret things that happen in life like that. Oh, I've been blessed, I got a salary increase, I've got a promotion in my job, I must be going well in the Truth. Very easy to thank God for these things that come along and presume from that that it may be a blessing from God. Does it mean you are going well in the Truth? Maybe, maybe not. It is not related, you see. It is easy to look around the ecclesial hall and say Oh, this brother or this sister is suffering, I wonder what they have done to deserve that? Oh, I could have seen that coming, be careful, you know, what has Job done to deserve this suffering. You know, if you think about it like this, it may be that the brother or sister that you know who suffers the most in ecclesial life is in fact suffering because they are more righteous than us!

What is the story of Job 1, and 2? The just would suffer for the unjust. What do you suppose would have happened if one of Job's three friends were caused to suffer like Job did? Leave the Truth, possibly leave the Truth. What if Satan was caused to suffer like Job did? Leave the Truth. But Job doesn't leave the Truth, you see, and that's why he is the only one that God could use to suffer like this. It may be that the brother or sister that we see in our midst that suffers, far from being wicked and being punished by God, is in fact the only one of us that could endure that kind of trial. Interesting isn't it? Interesting isn't it to think about it like that.

Remember in Ch 42:8 when the entire affliction is over and God says to Eliphaz, "Now Eliphaz, you go and make an offering, Job is going to pray for you and I am going to accept his prayer, lest I deal with you after your folly," he says in Ch 42:8, well there's the folly, there is the folly of Eliphaz and the friends. Let's never make the same mistake as Eliphaz and those friends, brothers and sisters. There is no direct correlation between sin and suffering in this life. The righteous sometimes perish, it does happen, the wicked sometimes prosper, it does happen, God's purpose is bigger than immediate retribution. There are lots and lots of other things at stake.

Well, Ch 3 now goes on to tell us that after seven days, Job does speak. V 1 says that "Job opened his mouth and cursed his day." It says "cursed his day," it means he cursed his very existence. He lamented his birth, he lamented his infancy, he lamented his manhood as we saw in our last study. V 20 of Ch 3, he says, "Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery and light unto the bitter in soul." What is the point of living if it is only to suffer? You see the reason Job says this is because he has a clear conscience, but he is in affliction, and it doesn't seem fair, these things that are happening to him don't seem to relate to his lifestyle, he is not a hypocrite, and if you believe that suffering comes as a punishment for sin, and Job is a great sufferer, Job has a problem, he feels that God is unjust, because he is suffering and he ought not to be suffering. So Job in fact instinctively, as we would instinctively, if we believed the very same false doctrine that his three friends did. Job is, in fact, a righteous man, Ch 1:1, he is called a righteous man, a perfect man you see.

Well, Eliphaz is the first to answer and in Ch 4 now, as we just read together, is the opening volley from Job's friend Eliphaz. Now we know quite a bit about Eliphaz. His name means "God is gold," and he is evidently the eldest of Job's three friends. Eliphaz is the one that speaks first and when all the dealing is done in Ch 42, God speaks to Eliphaz on behalf of the three friends. He is the most senior of the three and he appears to therefore take the responsibility for the three. He could be 30 or 40 years older than Job because Ch 15:10 says that he is a friend of Job's father, and so he is going to present himself in this argument as a father figure, and as somebody that Job ought to respect because of his considerable maturity. He approaches Job with a degree of seniority. He is going to speak three times, the Septuagint suggests he is a King, and we know that he is a Temanite. Now it is interesting, because historically Teman, the city of Teman, was known for its wisdom, and many hundreds of years later, God brought judgment on Edom for persecuting Israel and He said in Jer 49:7 "Is wisdom no more in Teman? Is Counsel perished from the prudent and their wisdom banished," he says "destruction is coming." The point is that Teman was one of the University cities of Edom. So Eliphaz the Temanite is a well-educated man and he is very very conscious of his own wisdom. Many times you read of Eliphaz telling people, and Job particularly, that Job should listen to him because what he says is worth listening to. Pretty confident, but he is also courteous, the most polite and the most sympathetic of the three friends. That's Eliphaz. Man of experience and of observation, a man of wisdom, and he is going to now try and get a confession out of Job, he's going to try to get him to repent, but Job's going to deny any wrong-doing. He is going to reject therefore the need for repentance and you can see immediately the conflict that is going to start between Job and the friends, and patience is going to wear thin, and tempers are going to flare, but despite that, by the time Eliphaz gets to his third speech in Ch 22, when he frankly thinks that Job is nothing more than an obstinate and blasphemous sinner, I mean, he thinks that; he still moderates his language, calms himself down and he pleads to Job to return to God and be healed. He has got general control of himself and his emotions, but there is no holding what he thinks.

Well here he is Ch 4:1. "Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said, "Job, if we assay to commune with thee, wilt thou be grieved, for who can withhold himself from speaking?" Well, Job, he says, will you be offended if we speak? You see the friends are sympathetic to Job's situation, they didn't want to intrude without permission, but Eliphaz says here, How can we not speak, I mean, look what's happened to you Job, he believes in exact retribution, he says, Well look, the writing is on the wall Job, there is a big gulf between what we see from you and obviously what God sees from you because look what's happening to you, how can we hold our peace?

Well, introduction to the conversation, this is where it is going to go from here. V 3, "Behold, Job, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands, thy words have upheld him that was falling, thou hast strengthened the feeble knees. So when other people have had difficulties you've been there for them, Job, "but now, it has come upon thee, and thou faintest. It touches thee, and thou art troubled," look Job, that's what he is saying. When others suffered you counselled them, you gave them advice, now you are suffering and you've gone to pieces. Well, fair go, Job, physician heal thyself, right? How come you can give advice but you can't take it? How come you can't even take your own advice, Job?

V 6, now delete the italics in this verse, "Is not thy fear," that is thy fear of God, thy confidence, "thy hope and the uprightness of the way," this is the NIV, "should not your piety be your confidence and your blameless ways your hope?" What have you got to worry about Job? Unless there is something you are not telling us? Unless there is something we don't know? Let's talk, Job. Let's talk fast, but let's talk. Now you remember, I previously asked the question, 'Why doesn't Satan appear again at the end of the book?' And I mentioned the fact that I would come back to this later. Let's think about this, after all, all of this is happening because of Satan. Job's suffering is not about any secret sins in Job, it is all because of the discussion with Satan. Well, you think about it from Satan's point of view, now you might have met this in ecclesial life before. So you've got a brother, you've got a brother who perhaps walks in the door here because he can't get on with...I don't know anything about the Houston situation, so I am speaking in my innocence....he can't get along at one of other ecclesias in Texas, so he walks in the door here at Houston and he says, 'Oh, you know, I'm transferring.' OK, you transfer him. There is some circumstance, nothing in particular, but he just can't get along with people, so he transfers and so you have him. Before long, you find that he can't get along with people here either, he's got a crotchet, he's got an issue here an issue there, he's making trouble, he's dogmatic about this or that and you think, "It just doesn't matter," well, so you go and you say, Maybe we should find out why he is really here, so you go back and you get on the phone and you ring brethren and you find out the complete story and you go to the brother and you say, You said that you came here because of this but I've checked and it is not true, this is what these people said. And it won't be long before in the conversation, his eyes will glaze over, he doesn't want to know, and if you keep pushing it, he will just leave, and he will just go off to another ecclesia. Why? Because he doesn't want the problem solved. Why not? Because he likes to be able to walk in here and say 'Well I don't go to Bible Class each week because this is how Christadelphians treat me. Oh, I've got this or that in my life and I'm not going to take it out of my life because this is what the ecclesia does.' And as soon as you try to clear that up and get to the bottom of it, he doesn't have an excuse or he will leave before you get to disproving his excuse, you see, he will just jump off to the next ecclesia.

You might have met that, well here's a Satan. So why isn't Satan here at the end of Job? Well he's got a theory about why Job's righteous, the fact is that Job is genuinely righteous, Satan despises him for it, he can see Job blessed and the reality is in the business world people trust Job, people don't trust this other brother, so they do business with Job and not with him and so Job gets rich and he doesn't. He's got a problem with Job, it is as simple as that. But if you try to get to the bottom of it with him, he will leave the meeting and go elsewhere. He will not let you get to the bottom of it because he wants to be able to say, 'It is all right for Job, God blesses him, but he hasn't blessed me so I can allow things into my life which God wouldn't permit because God is not as good to me as he is to Job.' 'Oh, you know, it is all right for Job, nothing can go wrong if you can just write a cheque and solve everything,' but as soon as you decide to go through it and say, 'not true, not true, because when Job lost all his money, he didn't just.....' Oh, got to go, got to go, and he will go to a new group of people and start the whole story again because they are not in a position to validate it.

So why isn't Satan here at the end of the book? Well, that's ecclesial life. Not only that, but what's going to happen here is that the three friends are going to take up the very argument that Satan would have made. What is Satan basically saying? Satan is saying Job's a hypocrite, there are things happening in Job's life which aren't actually consistent. He might appear very godly on the outside, but he is only in the Truth for the money. Well Eliphaz, after six verses, Well Job, why are you so worried? Why isn't your good conduct comforting you? Obviously there is something to talk about here. And immediately the implication of v 6 is, that Job is a hypocrite.

So you don't need for Satan to be here at the end of the book, you don't need to have any more discussion in this book, because the friends are going to pick up directly where Satan leaves off, and they will try to weed out the hypocrisy which they believe is clearly in Job's life because Job is suffering, apparently, unjustly.

Well, v 3, 'Job you've been exemplary, v 4 you were the example that everybody looked to Job, v 5, but now you're suffering, God's touched you, you are not doing too well Job, v 6, you've been caught, so what was the motive behind your uprightness Job? Maybe because it paid you to live like that, you see?' This is exactly the discussion that Satan would have had. And the very accusation that Satan would have levelled against Job is immediately picked up by the friends as they began to question his motives. They knew that Job was superior to them, just like the Satan did. But every question that he would have asked is now going to be asked by the friends, and in Ch 42 as we mentioned, God does take up this issue, this problem with the three friends.

Well, off he goes, v 7. "Job, remember I pray thee who ever perished being innocent, or where were the righteous cut off? Give me an answer." Whoever perished being innocent? Well, you could start with Abel, and the Bible lists all the prophets after that, Whoever perished being innocent? I mean, Eliphaz ought have known the story of Abel, but seems to forget it. V 8 "Even as I have seen," now here is the wisdom of Eliphaz, Eliphaz thinks he very wise, he prides himself on being wise, he prides himself on his acute powers of observation, v 8, "even as I have seen." V 12 "Now a thing was secretly brought to me." Ch 5:3, "I have seen." Ch 5:27 "Lo this, we have searched it, so it is. Here it Job, and know thou it for thy good."

Eliphaz is extremely confident of his view of life and his view of the Truth and his analysis of brethren and sisters and ecclesial life. This is Eliphaz. He's an older generation than Job and so he treats Job like a kid, but Job's a grown man. Well, I don't know, Job, I've been in the Truth a long time Job, I've seen this happen to brethren, you're not the first person this has happened to Job, this is how God deals with sin. You know, Job, I don't just rely on my observations, as good as it is, Job. V 12, "A thing was secretly brought to me, and my ear received a little thereof." What's he saying here brothers and sisters? "Inner thoughts, from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falls upon men, fear came upon me." I was in bed one night, a spirit passed before my face, and the hair of my head stood up. Something went Whoosh across the room. It stood still, but I couldn't discern the form."

Well, he is a red hot pentecostal! 'I stood still but I could not discern the form thereof. There was a silence and then I heard a voice,' "Shall mortal man be more just than God?" Look what he is saying, "Shall a man be more pure than his maker?" Now here is one of Eliphaz' doctrinal errors. He thinks God is so pure that nothing man can do can possibly please God. In v 18 he says that God doesn't even trust the angels. That's just not true! We have a doctrinal error in v 18 of Ch 4 of Job. He says that men are just little moths in v 19, that God crushes them every day in v 20. That's the difference between God and man and what God thinks of man. Now here is Eliphaz living the Truth, this is his view of God. We are just little moths we can do nothing, we are just little ants running round, there's nothing we can do to please God, and therefore punishment should come every other day, there's nothing we can do to please God. His whole view of God is completely jaundiced. And do you want to know something about the wicked Job? do you want me to tell you about the wicked? Ch 5:3. Job, in my wide experience, I've seen the foolish taking root, but suddenly I cursed his habitation, his children are far from safety, they are crushed in the gate, neither is there any to deliver them, whose harvest the hungry eateth up, and taketh it even out of the thorns, and the robber swallowed up their substance." What's he saying here? This is what happens to the wicked. I'll tell you what happens to the wicked. Their household is cursed, their children are killed, and they are robbed of everything they own. Well, can you see yourself in that Job. This is ridiculous. This is the opening speech brothers and sisters, of three friends who have come to comfort him. So what is the answer? V 17, "Happy is the man whom God correcteth therefore despise not the chastening of the almighty." V 21, "If you don't despise God's chastening, then thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue, and neither shall thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh." In other words, 'Repent, and your blessings will return, Job.' That's how God is.

V 27, "Job, we've searched it, so it is." We've figured it out, "hear it and know thou it is for thy good." Trust me Job, I know what I am talking about. Well, OK, with friends like these you know. What's he saying? What he is saying is that God is righteous, supremely righteous and that man is just supremely

unrighteous, that's his view of God, secondly, only the wicked suffer and thirdly, Job, repent and be blessed, that's the message, simple as that. That is basically what Eliphaz is saying.

Well, you can imagine, Job is pretty upset by this, Ch 6:5, Well, he says, v 5 of Ch 6, "Doth the wild ass bray when he hath grass or loweth the ox when he has fodder?" Eliphaz, do you think I am complaining about nothing? 'You say, 'Happy is the man who God correcteth,' in Ch 5:17, 'Well, you know, even animals complain when they suffer, is there no pity, Eliphaz?' V 24 of Ch 5, "Teach me," he says, "teach me, and I will hold my tongue. Cause me to understand wherein I have erred." Tell me what I've done wrong. Tell me what I have done to deserve the suffering that has come upon me. Don't just pretend things and make things up, show me my error, then I can understand it, and I can change my life. Don't give me this nonsense about your 'life's experience,' show me what my sin is. This is written poetically, you read the AV carelessly, this is, we are already at a pretty emotional situation after two or three chapters.

But of course, this brings round 2 and in comes Bildad in Ch 8. Bildad, you see, is a very, very different man to Eliphaz. Whereas Eliphaz is basing his wisdom on his experience or upon revelations that have come to him, Bildad bases all his wisdom on tradition. What have people done before me that I respect. Not a lot of thought here, just copy a model that appears to work. Here he is, look, Ch 8:8, this is Bildad's position. Now there is nothing wrong with copying other people's examples that work, if you are young, but as you grow a bit older, you need to find out what's behind it, you need to find out what the reasons are that people do what they do if you respect what they do, because you are going to have to teach those reasons. So there is no problem with being a traditionalist, but you need to know what's behind it, you need to have an understanding about what you do.

Here he is, v 8 Ch 8. "So enquire of the former age and prepare thyself Job to search of their fathers." Job what about yesterday? We know nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow, shall not they," that is the fathers, "shall not they teach thee and tell thee and utter words out of their heart?" 'Job, it has always been done this way, brethren far wiser than you and me, Job, have already wrestled with the questions that you are asking, and you don't agree, you don't agree, why, who do you think you are Job, you've got a problem with the wisdom of previous generations.'

This is Bildad, this is his approach to Job's problem, well here he is. Bildad means 'the son of contention,' you can see we've got a problem already, as soon as you meet the man. If Eliphaz is going to focus on the moral purity of God, Bildad concentrates on God's justice, so they both believe in the same God but they have got a different view of the character of God. All Eliphaz sees is that God is morally pure, God is righteous, and in contrast, man is just a little unrighteous moth. Bildad says, 'OK, that might be true, but my focus is God's justice, God doesn't do anything to you that you don't deserve. It is not a question of righteousness, it is a question of justice with Bildad, that is how he sees God's relationship to man. He's a cold brother, he is a deeply unsympathetic brother, he is completely unemotional. You've got to imagine that the discussion that Bildad has here, he wouldn't raise his voice, he wouldn't lower his voice, he'd just talk like this, 'Job, this is how it is, Job, you've got to understand Job, why do you think you know something that former generations haven't figured out, Job?' Well, he is a friend, he's one kind of friend I suppose, never gets excited, never gets upset and for him you see, Job's just a number, he's just a statistic, he's just a problem that has to be thought out and solved. And look at the solution, here's the solution from Bildad.

V 3 Ch 8, Now you think about this if I read it to you, you think about what this is saying, verses 3 and 4, "doth God pervert judgment, or does the almighty pervert justice?" You see, God is supremely just. Eliphaz's concentration was on God's righteousness, Bildad's is on God's justice. "If thy children had sinned against him and he has cast them away for their transgressions, etc. etc." You see what he is saying? 'Do you think God has made a mistake killing your children Job? Is that what you are telling me, God has made a mistake killing your children? God doesn't make mistakes. Your children are dead, that's

true, What does that mean? It means they were wicked. God never destroys the righteous, Job. Try and rise above the emotion, Job, try and rejoice in the justice of God, they are better off dead, Job, God is cleansing the earth.' This is a friend! And instead of coming alongside Job and trying to identify with him, and trying to relate to him, I mean, you know what, even if Job was a brother who had gone woefully wrong, if he had made a complete mess of his life, on day one, do you need to tell him that. Do you need to tell him that he's made some of the most foolish choices ever known to man, do you need to tell a man on day one? There will come a time to talk straight, but, come on? Bildad, 'get over it, it is the justice of God. I know it's your children, but we are all the children of God really, get over it, rejoice in the justice of God which is prevailing here, they were obviously wicked.'

All right, but you know, instead of coming alongside Job as I say, all Bildad's advice is detached, it is all aloof. Here is a man who has never ever really made the Truth personal, everything he says is cliches, look at v 11, look what he says here. He says, "Can the rush," that's the water reed, "can the rush grow up without mire, can the flag grow without water," he says. The point is that when the river dries up the water reeds are the first plants to die. What's the point? Well, the point is, when life goes well, everybody lives the Truth and when the blessings all stop, the hypocrites fall over first. That 's the point isn't it, that's the message here. It is unbelievable. V13, "So are the paths of all those who forget God, and the hypocrite's hope shall perish." That's what he says, 'Job, the blessings have stopped, you are not doing well, what's the point? Well, obviously you are a hypocrite.'

Well v 14, The hope of the wicked is like a spider's web, it looks secure but it is not. No matter how hard he tries, as soon as you lean on it it collapses under you. 'You haven't built your house on a rock Job, you've built your house on the sand, don't cry now.' V 16, talks about this little green shoot that leaps out of the earth and its roots are going all through the garden and then the green shoot dies, and there is no trace left and the soil that it once occupied is now occupied by other plants as if that green shoot had never ever existed. What's the point? 'That's what it is like with the wicked Job, you don't know about the wicked Job, do you know why? Because God erases them from memory. They're gone, they have ceased to exist, here one minute, gone the next. That's what God does with the wicked, Job.'

So what's the answer? You see, it is cliches really, unsympathetic, unfeeling cliches. Well, what is the solution, v 20, Ch 8, "Behold God will not cast away a perfect man, neither will he help the evil doers, become perfect, repent and be blessed," same message as Eliphaz. What's the point here? God is just, Eliphaz said God was righteous, Bildad says God is just. Eliphaz says only the wicked suffer, Bildad says the wicked are the first to be destroyed. Solution, repent and be blessed. You see, there are similarities, there are differences, but it is basically the same message you can see.

'Well, cheer up Job,' well, what would you say to that, Ch 9:21. 'Well,' he says, 'and again, delete the italics, it says here in the AV 'though I were perfect,' modern translations "I am perfect, yet would I not know my soul," that is, 'I am blameless, but I have no regard for myself, I despise my own life,' he says. 'And since I am going to die, I feel at liberty to say this,' v 22. 'This is one thing, therefore I said it, God does destroy the perfect and the wicked, you say he only destroys the wicked and blesses the righteous, that's not true. It is not true, look around, God does destroy the righteous and the wicked.' "Oh that I could talk to God about this," he says in v 32 of this chapter, 'but that's impossible, God will just destroy me in an instant.' Well, of course, Job raises the stakes a lot by making statements like that.

So here we are in Ch 11 and in comes friend number 3. This is the return volley from Zophar, and you know, of all the friends Zophar is absolutely the least engaging. Eliphaz approaches Job on the basis of experience, Bildad approaches Job on the basis of tradition, Zophar approaches him on the basis of assertion, pure assertion. He's restless, he's impulsive, he is the youngest it appears of the three, his argument lurches from one direction to the other, he doesn't really have anything of value to add, but he's very, very upset. You can think of it like this, Eliphaz, 'If you sin Job, this will happen because God is

righteous.' Bildad, 'you must have sinned Job, because this has happened, God is just.' Zophar, 'you have sinned Job, even more than you imagine, all this has happened, anyway, you haven't seen nothing yet.' I mean, this fellow, he's a brother, you've got to see it to believe it.

We don't know much about Zophar, a mysterious figure, his name means "impudent" or "departing," he's unstable, he's not a logical thinker, he is an unstable contributor to this debate. He is perhaps Zepho of Gen Ch 36 and perhaps a King, well, the point we have made before. A Naamathite, possibly from one of the seed of Naomi on the southern border of Judah, toward the coast of Edom, so on the border of Edom, an Edomite, nevertheless. He only speaks twice, now there are three rounds of friends' speeches. Eliphaz speaks in Chs 4 and 5 then Job answers, then Bildad speaks in Ch 8 and Job answers, then Zophar speaks in Ch 11 and Job answers, and so it goes but Eliphaz and Bildad speak three times, Zophar only speaks twice, he runs out of things to say. He just rants and rants and rants, but there is no content there you see, it is just emotion, and so of course, he is lost for words in the third speech, he is just so furious he is frothing at the mouth, he can't even open his mouth he's so angry.

Well, here he is, look at him. Ch 11;1, "Then answered Zophar the Naamathite and said, Should not the multitude of words be answered? Should a man, full of talk be justified." Straight into it you see, 'What are we listening to this for,' he says, v 3, "Should thy lies make men hold their peace and when thou mockest shall no man make thee ashamed?" 'Job, you liar, how much more of this do we have to take?' Pretty clear where Zophar begins. V 4, "For thou hast said, My doctrine is pure and clean in thine eyes." 'You think you're righteous Job, you want an audience before God so that he can justify you. Well I hope you get one Job, because do you know what God's going to do, do you know what God's going to tell you' v 5, "Oh that God would speak and open his lips against thee, and that he would show thee the secrets of wisdom that they are double to that which is. Know therefore Job that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserves." What does that mean? 'You haven't suffered enough yet, you haven't suffered enough,' says Zophar. 'God is punishing you less than you deserve.'

What more could you do to him brothers and sisters? Perhaps you could give him an even more throbbing pain in every inch of his body, perhaps you could kill his wife, perhaps you could do that, there isn't much left to do to this man, and Zophar says, 'bring it on,' 'because you are obviously an hypocrite, you are not confessing the sins that you've clearly committed. The fire's got to get hotter.' Phew! What you see here is a very unpleasant trait of character from Zophar. In his next speech, in his second and final speech in Ch 20, he devotes almost the whole speech to describing the intimate sufferings of the wicked, the curse, the torment, the agony, the mode of death,

Ch 2:12, this is how it reads from the NIV. "Of the wicked, "Though evil is sweet in his mouth," says Zophar, "and he hides it under his tongue, though he cannot bear to let it go and keeps it in his mouth, yet his food will turn sour in his stomach it will become the venom of serpents within him, he will spit out the riches he swallowed and God will make his stomach vomit them up." He says, "the wicked puts evil into his mouth like a piece of chocolate and he sticks it under his tongue, and wickedness is all he thinks about and it just melts away under his tongue and it goes down in him, but God will bring it all back up quick enough, you'll see.'

V 24 of Ch 20. He says, "though the wicked flees from an iron weapon, a bronze tipped arrow pierces him, he pulls it out of his back the gleaming point out of his liver, terrors will come over him." We've got the gory details of what, where has this come from? This is the imagination of a man's mind, this is like the Catholics telling you about the torments of hell, isn't it? This is what Zophar is doing to try to scare Job into repentance, and he's got this morbid fascination with the punishment that God is going to bring upon the wicked, you see. As I say, an extremely unpleasant trait of character, and his views, once again, are driven by his understanding of God. Eliphaz revered God for his righteousness, his moral purity. Bildad revered him for his justice, what's Zophar's angle? Omniscience, Zophar says God knows everything. Look at Ch

11:11, "for he knoweth vain man." "He Seeth wickedness also, will he not then consider it?" 'Job, he sees every sin we do. So even if you don't know what you have done wrong, God does, and so you are being punished for it now.' What's the solution, Job? V 13, "If thou prepare thy heart and stretch out thy hands toward God," v 18, "then you will be secure because there is hope. Yea they shall dig about thee, they shall take rest in safety." Repent and be blessed, here's the solution from Zophar, you see? Exactly the same as the rest. So there you have it. 'God is righteous' says Eliphaz, 'God is just' says Bildad, 'God is all-knowing' says Zophar. 'Only the wicked suffer' says Eliphaz, 'The wicked are the first to be destroyed,' says Bildad, 'Job hasn't suffered enough, he is that wicked and if you want to fix the problem, repent and be blessed,' there's the solution.

So here's the three friends, all spoken their first speech, that's the bottom line, that's what they say. But look at this, I mean, here's Zophar, his mother taught him, obviously, that he's got to be gentle on people, hard on the issue, Zophar, gentle on people, 'son, listen to me,' so here he goes, v 19, "And thou shalt lie down, none shall make thee afraid, yea many shall make suit unto thee," 'it will all be rosy again, Job, if you change your life, God will love you like he once did, and people will come back to you like they once did, Job, and entreat your favour.' Look at v 20. "But the eyes of the wicked shall fail and they shall not escape and their hope shall be as giving up of the spirit." He can't help himself, can he? He can't help himself. Everything he says has got a barb attached to it. And back and forth it goes for three cycles, Eliphaz, Job, Bildad, Job, Zophar, Job, three times apart from the third cycle where Zophar doesn't speak. And this is how it looks. You have the whole argument and I am not going to go through this, you can read it in your own time, but look, I've put some colour here, across these three arguments Eliphaz rebukes Job in various ways for his inconsistency, his impiety and so forth, so does Bildad, and so does Zophar, they all reprove Job for various things he says. They all describe the sufferings of the wicked here in blue, each of them. The character of God, compared with the character of Job in the suffering and the fate of the wicked, and finally, Repent, Repent, Repent. That is all the speeches of the friends, that is basically the argument.

What I am telling you is we don't need to read the second and the third speeches, no progress is made here. They are all basically saying the same thing from slightly different points of view, that's the message, it doesn't change, they just keep beating the drum harder and harder and harder. Job gets more enraged, they get more enraged, Eliphaz tries to pull it together and he settles down in the end. By the very last speech here, Bildad wrestles off for only six verses and Zophar is completely silent. Job in fact wins the debate. I will show you how he wins it in a minute, but he basically wins the debate. You could look at the friends a different way, here is the personality of the friends, the tone of their speeches, their view of the character of God, the basis of their wisdom, how they differently approach the problem of Job. I mean, you can see the arguments are basically exactly the same. They get more and more aggressive as the speeches progress.

Eliphaz gets his wisdom from observation and revelation, Bildad from tradition, Zophar, commonsense, It's obvious, it's obvious, look around you, it's obvious. Eliphaz thinks God is morally pure, or righteous, Bildad thinks he is morally upright or just, Zophar thinks he is all-knowing. You see even though the arguments are extremely similar it is helpful to magnify the differences so you can clearly see where the three friends are coming from, but having done so, there's not a lot of mystery there.

The conduct of God? Well, God deals with wickedness. The fate of the wicked, look at the amount of verses that these fellows devote to the fate of the wicked. Ch 20 for example, and Zophar, it is almost the whole chapter. He gives five verses as a bit of an introduction where he reprovved Job in Ch 20 and from V 6 right to the end, it is all about the fate of the wicked, that's all he has to offer. Quite unbelievable, and then an appeal as you can see at the end for repentance.

Do you know what happens to the wicked? Well, they are overcome by natural disasters, their children are killed while they are eating, they are cut down in the prosperity, they become poor, they get skin disease,

that's what happens to the wicked, they develop skin diseases, not thinking of anyone in particular, but they develop skin diseases. They suffer pain, they are driven from society, they feel no hope of deliverance, they have terrors on every side, they know the end is near and then they die, that's what happens to the wicked.

You can see what the friends are doing here, There is not much mystery here, is there? What's it all about, here's what happens, in the first cycle of speeches from Ch 4 - 14 the speakers approach Job as friends with a view to helping. They speak in general terms, using broad principles, the character of God, God's dealing with men, by their exact retribution theory, the fate of the wicked, Job's guilt is assumed and Job is exhorted to repent and reform from his implied evil ways. That's what you have seen.

Then the second cycle of speeches. The friends make no real progress, they restate their earlier positions in more specific and sometimes more brutal terms, outline in greater detail the fate of the wicked using descriptions in which Job is expected to see himself. Well, you can see that. No reference is made to repentance or the blessings that come therefrom. In the third cycle of speeches, Chs 22-26, the friends now become desperate, they are not getting the confession from Job that they expected. Job doesn't have long to live, how can they save Job, you see? This is their problem. They can see suffering only as a punishment for sin. Eliphaz attacks Job personally and finishes with an appeal for repentance. Bildad repeats an earlier argument that God is so great that all men are sinners before him and therefore deserve to suffer, and does not attempt to explain why the wicked prosper. Zophar declines to comment, The debate's over, Job's won, Job wins this. How?

How does Job win? In Ch 25 is Bildad's last speech and in Ch 25, Bildad gives a little six verse speech in which he tries to wrap up the whole thing, and hopelessly tries to elicit this confession from Job which is never ever going to come because Job hasn't done the sins that they are making up for him. In Ch 25, Bildad utters the final speech and this marks the end of the debate, and in Ch 24, Job contends that the wicked prosper and that the theory of exact retribution is false.

Now, this is it, you see, exact retribution said that only the wicked suffer, Job is a great sufferer, therefore Job is a great sinner, he is very wicked. The problem is that you look around and the righteous do perish, the wicked do prosper, it is not one for one. God does not exactly pay or debit people in the immediate sense, according to what they do or don't do in life, that just is not what you see around you. And Job raises this point and they can't answer it. Unless they can answer that, their whole argument falls over you see? That's the problem. Job says, 'the afflicted groan, but God does nothing, prove me wrong, he says, make me a liar, prove it, prove it.' This is what Job says, he really hammers it, 'prove it, show me.' Bildad makes no attempt to answer that, they can't prove it. Bildad in Ch 25 says, "And God is so great that no one can be innocent before him," and therefore in that application, sinners deserve to suffer. Oh we've got a problem then because Bildad's speech in Ch 25 is just a duplication of Eliphaz' first speech in Ch 4. The friends have got nowhere, they've just come full circle and Bildad is now restating Eliphaz' first speech. So Bildad's last speech restates Eliphaz' first speech, no progress there.

Job already agrees that there is no one just before God, I mean Job agrees that we are sinners, he has no problem with that, but if this is the case, why does Job suffer so much compared with other people? No one in the world is suffering like Job is suffering and he is arguably the most righteous man in the world? Well Job says, 'You my friends your answer to that is that I am clearly the greatest hypocrites in the world and that therefore makes it obvious, but I tell you, I am not, and you can't tell me what I have done. So not only am I the most faithful in the world I am suffering the most in the world. The argument doesn't work, that doctrine that you keep saying, isn't true.'

Job suffers more than the blatant wicked and that makes God unjust. If exact retribution is true, then God is not fair. Not only that, if God is so great and man is so small, he is just this little and, and God can just squash him, or punish him for the sins he does, but he doesn't know why and he suffers for sins he knows nothing about then doesn't this say that God is unintelligible? Unless God shows man the error of his ways isn't man entitled to say that God can't be understood? In either case the theory of exact retribution requires a correlation between sin and suffering. If this can't be demonstrated, Job wins the debate. He wins the debate. They can't prove that only the righteous prosper and only sinners suffer, they can't prove that.

Job silences them. This is not especially high powered logic.

You are going to say to me 'Well why did it take 22 chapters to get to that?' Why wasn't that the conclusion of the first speech? I will show you in the next talk why it took so long, but for now, that's pretty clear. He's won.

Come with me to Ecc Ch 7, let's wrap this up. There are some pretty good exhortations for us here, you know. You've just met three brethren from the ecclesia that Job was in. It is called the wider ecclesia that Job was in. they came from great distances but, the point remains, three brethren from Job's age. Here's the first one, what would you say of Eliphaz brothers and sisters, he's an older brother, he's seen a lot of life in the Truth? He believes that his experience meant that he could answer Job's questions. The problem with Eliphaz was that he wasn't prepared for the debate, he gets very upset when his position is challenged, particularly by a younger brother. Now Job wasn't especially young, you think about that in the end of the book of Job, Job is blessed with double what he had before, and he lives for another 140 years. Well if that was a double blessing you might say that Job is 70 years old when these calamities came upon him. He is not an especially young person, but Eliphaz might be 100. All right, Eliphaz might be a generation older, but he still thinks Job is a kid, 70 years old, all right. Now Job's polite, but Eliphaz has this pre-conceived idea about Job's situation and he's not agile enough to accommodate his facts to the problem. So Ecc 7:15, "All things have I seen in the days of my vanity says the Preacher, there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness and there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his wickedness." Ah! Exact retribution is not true! Ecclesiastes says so. The righteous perish, the wicked prosper, that's what Solomon observed. V 16, "Be not righteous over much, neither make thyself over-wise, why should thou destroy thyself, Eliphaz had a real problem believing he might not have all the answers, he was proud of his wisdom, his life was running along just fine, very happily, which he interpreted as a proof of his own righteousness, but there is a lesson here isn't there, age and experience are a great blessing but pride can destroy everything, can't it? Just because we are old, doesn't give us the right to be listened to — now, young people, that doesn't give you the right not to listen either, listen with your brain, but just because you are old, it doesn't mean that you have answers.

But where do answers come from? From here, (the Bible) so if you are old, you should spend more time in here simply, what we need is spiritual maturity, not chronological maturity, so the point is, start when you are young so that when you are old, you've got something of value for you to add, but don't pretend that just growing old with the years will give you spiritual wisdom, it won't. And Eliphaz ... if you want to play the age card, you'd better have something to back it up, otherwise you completely discredit yourself.

What about Bildad? Prov 27, here he is, so here's a man who couldn't sympathise with others, a man who completely lacked any tact at all. He's eloquent, he can certainly speak, he understood Job's argument, he wasn't confused about anything he said, but he made no effort to relate to Job personally, so he was a friend enough to want to help, and from that point of view he was wanting to make Job confront reality, and if he really believed Job had sinned, he was better to rebuke the sin and maintain silence, but what was Bildad's motive? Ch 27:5, "Open rebuke is better than secret love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful," so here's Bildad, he won't let the place remain silent, he really

believes Job has sinned, he will never give the kisses of an enemy, he won't, just because Job's his friend, he won't just pretend that whatever Job does is fine, because he is his friend.

Now here is a message to young people, don't cover up sin. There is a way to expose sin, but sin must be dealt with and if people are doing things they ought not to be doing, that needs to be discovered, not published, necessarily, but it needs to be discovered so that solutions can happen, and that's Bildad's motive, no question, but come with me to Prov 12. You know what, there is a way to say things at the same time, isn't there? Prov 12:17, "He that speaketh truth showeth forth righteousness, but a false witness showeth forth deceit," so there is no question Bildad is after truth. "There is, v 18 that speaketh like the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise is health." You can speak therefore and inflict the wounds of a friend or you can inflict the piercings of a sword, there is a difference. Having the right answer is only half the game, having the right delivery is the other half of the game, isn't it? You might have the answer, you might see the issue clearly, but there is a way to say it, and Bildad, really didn't understand that. 'If your children are dead, they must have sinned. God knows best Job,' and he supports his whole argument with platitudes doesn't he? What's behind that do you suppose? Well here's a man who has never been tested, here is a man who is extremely shallow in the Truth, he can't sympathise with Job because nothing bad has ever happened to him, he's just too immature in the Truth. He's never had to rely upon God, nothing has ever gone that drastically wrong so he can't understand when it really goes bad for people, he can't understand why they don't just pull themselves together and get over it. He's never been in that position, has he? He's never really likely to get down to what Job's asking because he's never asked the questions that Job is asking, and there is a lesson there, he's a traditionalist. He only does things in the Truth because other people do them, not that that is always bad if you are young, that's all you can do, but as you grow up, there ought to become a bit of depth in that, he has no depth, he's got no personal commitment to the answers he gives. He's got no skill in the game, he's doesn't really even understand what he is saying.

In fact the Truth is all about people isn't it? It is not about the institution, it is not about the ecclesia, it is about the people, people ARE the ecclesia. He didn't get that at all. And what about Zophar, Prov 17, here he is, Now he is a real problem, Zophar, he's aggressive, he's emotional, he's inexperienced and he's got a morbid fascination with suffering, almost as if he comes to see Job just so he can look at the damage. Ok, so you've got an issue in ecclesial life, perhaps there is a serious issue in ecclesial life, a conduct issue, and someone comes in and they'd like to talk about that, they'd like to know a bit about that, I mean, they want to know EXACTLY what happened, 'and then what happened?' 'And then what happened?' Is this useful? he is the sort of person who is interested in finding out all the unpleasant details almost as though he gets some satisfaction when a sinner is caught. Prov 17:5, "Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his maker and he who is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished." He does not understand that God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. When a brother falls, it is not a cause of rejoicing, or some perverse fascination, it is not a good thing or an exciting thing in any way when a brother falls. You see, it appears as though Zophar has got a very imperfect love for the Truth. He's got a secret desire to participate in wickedness himself and therefore a sort of envious satisfaction when a sinner is caught and suffers heavily and publicly, a bit like the prodigal son's elder brother. How did he know that his brother was cavorting and rioting with women and worldly living, how did he know all this? The younger brother has been out there away from home, well, he's finding out and he's imagining what it might be like, but he's staying home because he might lose his inheritance, but his heart is out there with the younger brother. A very shallow love for the Truth, a very imperfect love for the Truth. In his first speech he says Job hasn't suffered enough. The only thing he knows about the character of God is that God sees everything, so here's Zophar on his guard for what God might see him do, that's what's keeping him in the Truth, you never hear anything about grace or mercy or love from Zophar.

There is an exhortation here isn't there. God is righteous, of course, he can't look upon sin, he does see everything, all these things are true, but if that's all there is to God, we are in big trouble. And unless that changes, I would suggest that Zophar hasn't got long in the Truth, because fear of the consequences won't hold you for long. Fear of missing out on the kingdom won't keep you in the Truth for long, you know, it is not a good reason to get baptised, just because if you don't you won't be in the kingdom, that's not a good reason to get baptised.

The Truth is all about developing a relationship with God and with His son. You marry somebody because you love them not because, well 'it is the best of what I can see around me.' You think about that. Well the friends really didn't make any progress, as I say, in twenty chapters, they were abrasive, they were repetitive, they were wrong in much of what they said, but, in a funny way they helped Job, you know, because by chapter 26 Job doesn't any longer believe the same things as he believed in Ch 3, there's been a development, but of course to explain that to you would be to break into the next study.

Transcript by Fay Berry 2017



Fay Berry

03:13 (9
hours
ago)

to Art

Study 5 - Job - "The restoration of Job" by. Neville Clark

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Job Ch 40

Just before we begin, I would draw your attention to this handout at the back of your stapled sets. What I have endeavoured to do here is to write the argument of Job all on one page, and in order to do that, I have got the four groups of characters of the book across the top row. So we've got Job, his friends, Elihu and then God, these are the four main speakers, if you like in the book, and as far as the content of their words is concerned, I would split each set into issues relating to Job's suffering, Job's alleged sin, God's character and the solution to the problem.

As you will appreciate, Job's view of his suffering and his sin is very different to what the friends say and what Elihu says, and even what God says. And the solution to the problem is very different between them all so if you were simply to read across each of these sections, for example, if you talk about Job's suffering, just read across each of these sections and by the time you get to God's position on Job's suffering, you've resolved the entire issue of the suffering of Job.

And similarly with Job's sin, such as it might have been or might not have been, God's character has got the solution to these things, so hopefully read through that and try to, at a glance if you like, make sense of the entire argument of the book of Job. Take time to read it, because it took me a long time to make it.

Ok, where are we? Here we are here. We are down to this last section. Remember the explanation of Elihu and his four speeches and so we've got before us this afternoon essentially two interactions between Yahweh and Job. Chs 38 and 39 and then Chs 40 and 41 where God speaks to Job twice. You will remember that these are the companion sections, if you like, to when God spoke to Satan twice right at the very start, so as we said before there is a symmetry about the book of Job.

Well, as you can see for 35 chapters now, from about Ch 3, this controversy has raged about the real purpose of Job's suffering. Did he sin or didn't he? and how the argument has gone.

And you remember in our last talk, yesterday evening, Job had a major complaint against God. He wanted to take God to court because he felt he had been mis-treated, that God wasn't doing a good job of running the place, that wickedness went untended and that the righteous suffered and they really ought not to do so. Well Job basically is saying that God acts in an arbitrary and destructive manner, and there's chaos out there, who can tell what is happening? 'God is unjust and he lets the wicked prosper. He can't be understood you can't really find out what happens around you. He is unjust, I am a righteous man and I am not being treated as such,' and that makes God unrighteous in Job's eyes. Finally, not only is he personally righteous but the only way to resolve this in Job's mind is for God to declare it so, essentially that God vindicate Job publicly because he has been humiliated publicly.

That's where we left it yesterday and if we had done the Elihu study as a study and we had slides, I could show you this, but I will show it to you now. Elihu comes in and says, 'Aha, not so fast. By all means take your complaint to God if you wish, but I would suggest that would be unwise. Why don't you bounce it off me first and then see if you still want to go to God?' So back comes Elihu. What does Elihu think about the fact that God acts in an arbitrary and destructive manner? 'Not true. God sustains life,' says Elihu, 'he manages the earth, he uses the elements to judge, give life and to show mercy.' Now I didn't cover all of this with you this morning but here's the verses, this is what Elihu says. 'There is nothing arbitrary about creation,' that's his point. Secondly, 'God is unjust and lets the wicked prosper,' 'No, not true' says Elihu 'God is just, and there are unexplained judgements, people just disappear, that is God taking care of wickedness. Wickedness will continue until Christ is in the earth, wickedness will continue. But, God has a brake on it, and it will only continue so far,' that is Elihu's point. 'Well, God is silent,' says Job, and he can't be understood.' 'Well, in fact, God is not silent at all, he communicates by dreams to man, through suffering, through chastisement and by mediators. God does communicate with man, he's far from silent, you are just not listening Job.' That's Elihu's point. 'God is in fact the perfect teacher but he doesn't listen to the prayers of the inconsistent, he doesn't answer the proud, that could be the problem with your lack of communication.' A very astute answer by Elihu. 'Well,' Job says, 'God has mis-treated me.' Elihu says, 'You are suffering because of sin, not the sins that the friends have made up about you, not the closet life-style of hypocrisy that the friends have theorised about, you are suffering because of what you have said in this debate, and if you had learned quicker, your suffering would have concluded, but look to where you have taken the debate, and so it would be unfair for God to remove your suffering and leave you in this elevated self-righteous position.' Job says, 'I want my day in court. I need God to tell me that I am, in fact, righteous.' Elihu says, 'Listen, you are not righteous, you have sinned in this debate, by being self-

righteous and by being rebellious, by not learning quick enough.' And then Elihu provides the audience Job desires so Job wants vindication and Elihu says, 'I will give you vindication I'm here to defend you, I'm here to vindicate you, answer me if you can. Tell me if I have misrepresented you, tell me if I have got it wrong?'

Silence from Job. So this is big thing, Elihu begins to answer Job's desire for vindication before everybody. Immediately he says, 'Well declare God's righteousness to man,' and that is exactly what Elihu began to do for Job. 'Well make atonement for it.' Well he can't do that, to give him hope of life, so Elihu explains the atonement to Job, he explains how Job can be fully reconciled to God through all of this. The three friends had a very immature and infantile approach to the Truth, it was all about 'exact retribution,' if you do this, God does this, do this and God does that, and it wasn't very much more complex than that. Elihu has added an entire new dimension to the picture and he has marvellously helped Job prepare for the interview with God. As I say, if Elihu hadn't said this, and if Job had gone into the interview without these answers, where do you think he would be in his approach to God?

This is the structure of Chs 38 to 42. Come back to Ch 38 because we are going to start here. There has been a great storm as you know, and the rain has started to come down, and now standing in the darkness in the pouring rain, the sun's completely obscured, the only light is from the Shekinah glory above them and the voice is booming over the storm and the thunder and lightning is just crashing all around them, and there they are in this remarkably cocooned scene, these three friends, plus Elihu, plus Job and God overshadowing them. Now we've got to explain everything else that Elihu hasn't yet explained. "Gird up thy loins," V 3 of Ch 38, "like a man. I will demand of thee, answer thou me." 'All right, Job, you wanted the interview, you wanted your day in court, now it is come, I hope you are prepared for it.' And you can see here, between Chs 38 and 41, God is going to speak twice. Here is His first speech, Chs 38 and 39 and here's the second speech, Chs 40 and 41. Ch 42 is like the epilogue of the book. In the first speech you can see at a glance how this breaks up, pretty much. Well, there's a bit of a problem, if you look at Ch 38, the chapter break comes after Ch 38:41, but the chapter break really ought to be after Ch 38:38 because the first 38 verses of Ch 38 describe the inanimate creation; the earth, the sea, the sun, the light, the dark, the wind, the stars, the clouds, all the physical creation about us. In v 39 of Ch 38 almost to the end of Ch 39, you've got the animate creation, or the animals described. So unfortunately, the chapter breaks - well how did they get that wrong? It is pretty clear when you look at it, but the chapter break is in a very bad spot. The chapter break really ought to be after Chs 38:38 and that would put all of the animals into Ch 39.

Then there is a small confession by Job in the first five verses of Ch 40, and then we have God speaking again, and we've got more animals described in Ch 41, the behemoth which I believe is the hippopotamus and the leviathan, which is the crocodile. And then, of course, we have another confession by Job. So you can see, God's open challenge, the first speech, Job's confession. God's opening challenge, the second speech, Job's confession, and then the completion of the book, you see? So that's how this last section breaks up. No mystery there, really, pretty simple, but extremely powerful.

I suppose the obvious question that arises from this is, you can see what Job's allegations against God are, how is this going to answer that? If you have ever read these last chapters of Job before and thought 'What does it all mean? What is this supposed to mean?' So Job's self-righteous, you can glean that without too much work, because Elihu just says 'You are self-righteous.' So in order to deal with Job's self-righteousness, God gives him a burst on the physical creation, a burst on the animal creation and a second burst on the animal creation, as a result of which, Job repents in dust and ashes and says, 'You're right, I'm wrong,' the whole book concludes.

How does this answer a man who is self-righteous? Obviously, there is a riddle here. There is something that has to be unlocked here. When I first read this, I thought the answer was that Job accuses God of being a poor ruler of the world, that God doesn't know what he is doing, that he is indiscriminate about how he treated people, that he can't be understood by his creation. Then God simply comes in and says 'Well,'

Job, 'where were you when I created the earth? Do you know how the clouds work, do you know how the tides of the sea are bounded by the sea shore, do you know these things? Do you feed the creation? Do you know how the animals operate?' as if to say, 'Job, if you don't understand these things, you've got no right to tell me I'm not a wise creator,' as if God has simply bombarded Job with questions Job couldn't possibly understand and pushed him into a corner and side-stepped the issue about righteousness. I mean, it is almost how it reads.

But it can't be that, because that wouldn't convince Job, any more than it would convince you or me. What this must mean, as I say, therefore, is that there is a code in here. There is a riddle here, and that this, in fact, is the story of righteousness somehow, because that's Job's big issue. And this is the answer to that issue, so what we are going to do now is a little detective work and unravel what the story is of this explanation by God to Job's allegation that he is more righteous than God. You see the problem? There must be a solution here to that question somehow.

So what does God actually say? Here is the first speech, the inanimate creation, the physical creation. Well, here it is. So you can see that what we are talking about, here is the earth, the sea, the sun, light and dark, the weather, the stars, the clouds. This is the first major speech and the lion's share of Ch 38 of Job. Now look what God says here. V 4, "Where wast thou Job, when I laid the foundations of the earth, declare if thou hast understanding, who laid the measures thereof if thou knowest, or who hath stretched the line upon it?" So God picks up now where Elihu left off, dealing with the creation. You know, Elihu never really finishes speaking does he? He just, in fact, gets drowned out by the noise of the storm and then the voice of God comes in over the top. Elihu is speaking right up to the end of Ch 37 and God comes straight over the top. From Job's point of view, this is almost one continuous conversation.

He can't answer Elihu, Elihu has prepared him to hear the voice of God, he can't answer Elihu, and then God comes straight in and Job's feeling pretty small as this great light shines above him and the voice of God comes down upon them. What did Job know about the formal function of the earth? that's what God asks in these verses. Clearly the earth was made to a plan, clearly it is operating to a plan, it is maintaining a balance that supports life, what did Job know about that? 'Even the angels rejoiced when creation was completed' he says, but Job thought he knew enough to criticise how God ran the world. Not that God is trying to overwhelm Job with the complexity of these questions, but these are the answers to Job's questions.

'All right, Job, what about the sea? What do you know about the sea, Job,' V 8, "Who has shut up the sea with doors, when it breaks forth as if it issues from the womb? V 10 And break up for it my decreed place, and set bars and doors, and said, Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further and here shall thy proud waves be stayed?" What's the point? The point is, that the natural elements have boundaries, Jer 5:22 says, "I placed the sand for a bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet an they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it." So God has put the sand for a boundary on the sea, it is designed that way, the sea can never breach the beach, that's his point. The sea can never overrun the land again. Bear in mind, it has done it before, the sea has overrun the land before and God says in Jeremiah, 'I will put a boundary to the sea, the sea will stay in its place. It is not uncontrolled out there in creation. I have created it specifically like this.'

'All right,' says Job, 'that's fine, but the wicked prosper? I look around, nothing ever happens to them nothing goes wrong for the wicked, they go to bed happy.' 'Oh' says God, 'think about this Job. Who do you think it was that told the sun to rise?' We might say, how does this answer the question? Look at v 12, "Hast thou commanded the morning, since thy days, and caused the dayspring to know his place?" The dayspring is the sun. 'Have you commanded the sun to know when to go up and when to go down? No you haven't.' Well so what? V 13, "That it might take hold of the ends of the earth, that the wicked might be shaken out of it?" So what is it saying? Well you can imagine the earth like a blanket with the crinkles in it,

that's the hills, and the sun comes up over the side of this blanket, and it plays its light on the blanket, and that shakes all the wicked out of the blanket, because what happens? Well, men love darkness because their deeds are evil, and as soon as the sun comes up all the criminals run for cover. God says, 'I've done that, the sun rises every day to control wickedness in the earth. You think the wicked go unchecked, you think it is chaos out there, not at all, I've made it like this,' and Job is thinking, 'I've never thought about it like that,' but it is true, and it is true, what do we have street lights for? Not just so you can drive your car. Light dispels darkness, light dispels wickedness, and God says, I am making the sun rise to control wickedness. Job, you've just got no idea about the wisdom I have put in place. 'Well,' says Job, "sure, but who knows this, who do you tell this to? I mean you are incomprehensible, who can understand what you do,' you see, none of this points to God. In Ch 28 he says, "If I go to the depth of the earth or the depths of the sea, I can't find wisdom." V 16, God says, 'Well, Job, hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? Or hast thou walked in search of the depth? Have the gates of death been opened unto thee or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death? I go to those places Job, I go to the greatest depths of everywhere, I know what is happening, everywhere, Job. Now you aren't able to understand that anymore, because you can't go to those depths yourself, which, of course you can't do.' The implication is that God is in complete control, he know what he is doing, and he does have man's best interests at heart. It is interesting, you know, Rev 20:13 says this, "And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them, and the books were opened," you see, God's wisdom extends to the depth and the breadth and he uses it to save man. 'And I might add Job,' says God, 'nature is not as much out of control as you think, I've got complete control over the elements and they are used for judgment,' V 22, "Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow? Hast thou seen the treasures of the hail which I have preserved against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war?" 'There is a day when wickedness will be eradicated and it will be my creation that does it.'

Now you know in Ezek 38 hailstones, fire, earthquake, is what destroys the Gogian invader. It is the issues of nature which are played out on the northern army that God uses. He says, 'I've got complete control over creation, and I might tell you, there is latent power within the creation which no man has ever seen, which one day I am going to turn the key and unlock it and men will be destroyed the world over,' says God. 'Don't pretend that creation is out of control. If it was out of control, you wouldn't be standing here right now, because look at the power that creation has got, the natural creation's got, Job, you just don't know what you are saying.' V 26, 'And he says, I cause it to rain on the earth where no man is, in the wilderness wherein there is no man. Creation is not just reserved for judgment, Job, it also saves itself, it preserves life in itself. You are not out there in the wilderness, Job, no-one's out there in the wilderness, feeding these animals, raining on them, but I am out there. I'm doing it, Job. Job can't believe what he is hearing but God is not overwhelming Job with hard questions that he can't answer, he is telling him how he thinks. He is telling him how he thinks about his creation, and how he is going to use his creation.'

V 31. Job has already said, back in chapter 9:9 that God made Arcturus, Orion and Pleiades, God made the stars, well look at V 31, he says to Job, "Job, can't thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades or loose the bands of Orion?" Now, 'the sweet influences,' I don't know where this translation came from, 'the sweet influences' this should be 'cluster.' "Job can't thou bind the cluster of Pleiades or loose the bands of Orion," now what does it mean? Well, the Pleiades in Greek mythology were seven Greek sisters and there are seven stars in the constellation of Pleiades. They are not related to each other these stars, they just happen to be in the same spot in the sky, but they are billions of miles apart, and as the year goes by, they move closer and further away but they stay in a cluster, but they don't remain exactly the same distance away from each other, and God says, 'Can you bind them?' Of course not, and the Orion, the twin star, these stars orbit each other like this, and by a particular relationship of their gravitational forces, they stay always the same distance apart. 'Can you loose them? Can you bind Pleiades and can you loose Orion, Job? Can you do that?' Of course, there is no chance that Job can possibly do this. What 's the point, the point is that God made the stars and he controls them, the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night, everything does as it is told, everything operates as it is designed. If God can control the big influences, he can obviously control the smaller influences as well. And in conclusion here of this section, here it is, the design of the earth, V 36. "Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts," The RSV says "the clouds." 'Who has put wisdom in the clouds, or who has given understanding to the heart?' The RSV says 'the mist.' "Who has put wisdom in the clouds? Who has given understanding to the mist?" He says. There is a designer here, that's the point, creation is not haphazard, it doesn't happen by mistake, God controls everything.

I made a comment a moment ago that God is not just bewildering Job with complex arguments that Job can't hope to match God upon, he is telling Job what he thinks. Now what do we mean by that, V 8, "The sea was born," it issued out of the womb, "The sea was born." The earth in V 9 "was wrapped in swaddling bands," in V11, "the earth was instructed in the way of life." The sun in V 12, "Was given a work to do." "Light was born," in V 21, "Rain has a father," in v 28, "Ice comes from the womb," V 29, and when it all began, V 7 "the angels rejoiced, the morning stars sang together." Do you know what? God treats this earth as his off-spring. You know, when God brought his own son into the world, his mother wrapped him in swaddling clothes, he was instructed in the way of life. God taught him wisdom, and gave him a job and he was there for the blessing of man and the angels rejoiced at his creation. That is exactly what he does with his children. So if God says, this whole earth is a physical type of my son which is to come and I wrap this thing here in swaddling clothes, that is exactly what it says in V 9, 'I wrap the earth in swaddling clothes, just like I wrap my son. I've taught the earth wisdom, just like I've taught my son, and these are for the benefit of man, just like my son. That's how I think about creation, Job.' You'd never think that God would talk like that, and that's the section in Ch 38.

Now what about the animals. Well, here is the animate creation, and here they are and what we know is immediately all the animals occur in pairs. So he talks about the lion and the raven and the wild Goat, the deer, the wild ass, the unicorn, which is a now extinct wild ox, the peacock - the peacock is actually the stork, the ostrich, the horse, the hawk, the eagle. These are all the animals of Job Ch 38 and all of Job Ch 39, and each of these animals occur in pairs. And the ostrich, in fact, occurs twice. The ostrich is compared to the stork in terms of motherhood, or length thereof, and the ox which is compared to the horse, in terms of fearlessness and speed. So the ostrich occurs twice, and as soon as you see that, everything occurs in pairs. The lion, the raven, the goat, the hind, or the deer, the wild ass, the wild ox, the ostrich and the horse, and the ostrich and the stork and the hawk and the eagle. Whilst it is true that you could simply read this as a great list of how God cares for his creation, there is a lot more to it than that, there must be, because as Job completes this first interview with God, He responds, He responds, and then God, having done this comes back with another pair of animals in Ch 40, the leviathan and the behemoth.

So there is no coincidence that these are all in pairs, because in Ch 40, there is going to be another pair of animals that get given to Job to consider. You think, 'All right, what is the point here, what is the point of all these animals?' Well, you've got a clue. Here is the clue in Ch 40:15, you've got a clue about what God means when he talks about these animals. I told you, it is written in code. We've just got to break the code. Here it is here. V 15 of Ch 40, the behemoth, the hippopotamus, "Behold now, behemoth, which I made with thee." What does that mean? Well, you could say, perhaps the hippopotamus was made on day six and that happens to be also when man was made on day six. But so what? What's the point of telling us that? There must be an inference here, brothers and sisters and young people, that in some way the behemoth represents man. That he is like a man in some way. Well, that is a good theory, what else can you offer me? Well, I will offer you this, come across the page to Ch 41:34, the last verse of Ch 41. Now here is leviathan, the crocodile. "He beholdeth all high things he is king over all the children of pride. Now there is no doubt about that, crocodiles don't have pride, animals don't have pride, he represents man, the crocodile represents man. The hippopotamus represents man, all these animals represent men. Ah, we've broken the code you see. We've broken the code, ok? Come back to Ch 38. End of Ch 38, look at them, here's the first couplet. Ch 38:39, "Wilt thou hunt the prey for the lion or fill the appetite of the young lions when they crouch in their dens and abide in the covert to lie in wait? Who provideth for the raven his food when his young ones cry unto God, when they wander for lack of meat." And immediately here there are implications for Job, because the lioness kills to feed her young, and leaves the rest for the ravens. So the noblest of beasts and the meanest of birds, yet one helps the other, and in the context of nature, none of us blink at that, we say, that's fine, that's how nature works. But it raises the question, of suffering injustice, doesn't it, because in killing for its young and feeding the raven, the prey suffers as an innocent victim, doesn't it? There is an animal here which suffers, in order to nourish the lion and the raven. Well, what's the prey? V 1, Ch 39, "Knowest thou the time when the wild goats of the rock bring forth, or canst thou mark when the hinds do calve," these are the prey, these are the animals the lions kill. V 4, "Their young ones are in good liking, they grow up with corn, they go forth and return not to them. Ah, that's interesting, because these are animals for prey, but God cares for them, and in v 4, what's the point? The point is they breed quickly, their young ones can pretty much run from the day they are born, they grow up very fast, they leave home very early, they don't come back. They are completely independent. It would be a

problem, wouldn't it, if the goats had a number of young and the young took 20 years to nurture to adulthood like they do for humans, you'd kill the goat population immediately, they would become extinct overnight. But that is not how they have been created though, goats breed very fast, their young are almost independent from the day they are born, and within a very short while, they go and never come back. They do their own thing. So, God has created the goats to be independent that they might be food for the lion. The lion goes about its business, feeds its young, eats what it wants, leaves the rest and the ravens are fed because the lion doesn't eat the whole carcass. Think of that? So the lion kills the deer, the raven feeds off the kill as an unintended beneficiary.

Satan afflicted Job. Three friends are going to learn enormous lessons as unintended beneficiaries. They know about as much about Satan as the raven does of the lion. The raven doesn't know where the carcass comes from, he just comes along and picks the meat off the bones, but did God provide for Job? Does God provide for the deer and the goats? Absolutely, absolutely. And those wild goats, you know, these wild goats here, these are very different sorts of people to what Job was. Job's got nurses, he's got servants, he's got people to run after him, these wild goats, they are poor, they are poor people, they've got to fend for themselves, they live life tough, they survive. They've got big families, no chance of ever making them extinct, they are happy, their kids just run off very, very early in life and go and start their own families and do their own thing. Oh yes, the lions take some of them but they breed so fast it doesn't matter.

Job 39:5, the wild ass, what about him? 'Who has sent out the wild ass free, who has loosed the bands of the wild ass.' Here's a person who can't be tamed, he's the person who can't be instructed, he's wilful you see, he won't listen. He's a brother actually, in ecclesial life, that's what he is. Or he might be a sister, but let's say he is a brother. Gen 16:12, Ishmael was a man like this. A wild ass of a man Genesis says. God says so, that is what Ishmael would be like, wild, unruly, fiercely independent, you can't work with him, it's got to be done his way or it won't be done any way at all. That's why he lives in isolation, he can't relate to people. He can't really handle a big ecclesia, he just wants a little meeting way out in the wops somewhere. Look at V 7, "He scorns the multitude of the city." He doesn't go to Bible Schools, because he doesn't like crowds. He might not be unfaithful, he just can't handle a big gathering. They exist, don't they. They exist. He lives a simple life, he lives a humble life, people and society mean nothing to him. If you upset him you will find it out very quickly. He's got a problem with crowds, he'd just rather be out there by himself.

V 10, The unicorn, or as he is, the wild ox. "Canst thou bind the wild ox with his band in the furrow or will he harrow the valleys after thee." Here's somebody with all the potential in the world. This creature is immensely strong, you get one of those and you can get rid of all your tractors, he can pull anything. All the potential in the world, but not the will. Immensely powerful but he'll never ever work for you. Not because he is wilful, not like the wild ass, but because he is just uncooperative. He is just contrary, he doesn't like doing it, therefore V 11, Who will trust him, you can never rely on him. He will never ever deliver what he says. If you could harness him, brothers and sisters, he would do the work of ten men, but who can tell him. If you try and force him, he'll mow you down. They exist. Well I don't say this is a good characteristic but it is real life.

And the ostrich contrasted with the peacock here, or as it is the peacock ought to be the stork. The ostrich and the stork, V 13, "Gavest thou the goodly wings unto the stork, or wings and feathers to the ostrich?" Looking at the stork, she is the classic figure of maternity, she's given her life to motherhood and apple pie, I mean it is the sort of sister she is, isn't she? You skin your knee, she's the person you want to go and see. But look at her in comparison to the ostrich, flappy, showy, a complete scatter brain, 'God's deprived her of wisdom' he says in V 17, she actually has no brains, that's what she's like. She's just not the sharpest knife in the rack, she lives her whole life with her head in the sand. She might be in the ecclesia, she might contribute well, only to undo everything she has done with some foolish action, some foolish word, and she's got kids, Oh, don't ask about the kids. V 16. She's hardened against her young ones, as though they were not hers. The kids have almost got to bring themselves up. Oh, that the stork adopted them but that is just not how it is, and life is like that, you see, people are like that. Not good, she needs to change, but some people are born starting from this position.

And the horse, V 19, "Hast thou given the horse strength? Hast thou closed his neck with thunder?" Here's a man who is born for the battle, or a woman for that matter, these are like the trade-unionists of life, born for the battle, you can't scare them, you threaten them, it only raises the stakes. V22, "He mocketh at fear and is not affrighted. Neither turns he back from the sword." Here's somebody who looks for conflict, and if there is no conflict it is about time to create some. Loves it. You've got to be careful, you see, if there is a scrap on, particularly if there is an ecclesial issue on he could be a very trusty ally, but he could spend his life fighting. The problem is, if the battle ever finishes he is likely to bolt right out of the Truth. That happens too. These are the members of your ecclesia in Job 39, they are the members of my ecclesia, this is what we are like, brothers and sisters.

And the section closes with the hawk and the eagle, Vs 26 onwards, "Doth the hawk fly by wisdom and stretch her wings towards the south? Doth the eagle mount up at thy command and make her nest on high," he says. This is the wisdom of migration and the wisdom of habitation. One bird for some reason just knows where it has got to go in life, and the other bird knows how to protect itself and knows where to put the best investment. It knows to build its house high up on a cliff where no-one can get into it, it just instinctively is smart about some of those life-decisions. But once again, they are creatures of prey, and it is a funny thing that often amongst us, and often in life the people who are the sharpest, the people who make the smartest decisions, the people who can see issues for what they are, often don't have a lot of feelings for other people. These animals they are smart, they are extremely smart, but they are creatures of prey. Their young ones V30 Drink blood. It is a funny thing isn't it?

What is God showing Job? These are my pairs, my pairs of animals and here is the last pair. Here are the lessons and here are the allegations that Job made. So here we are. 'Job, you say that God is a poor ruler of the world but God's power in creation is constructive, it is controlled, and it is used for the benefit of all creation,' that's God's answer. 'Job, you say that God is unjust and let's the wicked prosper. Well God in fact restrains sin, the wicked don't have carte blanche control over the whole world, that's just not true. The sun rises and stops there and God's long-suffering. He doesn't rejoice in the destruction of the wicked,' Oh that he would convert the wicked, otherwise where would we be, brothers and sisters? But he will one day destroy them. God is sorry he can't be understood, well, that's because man can't plumb the dimensions of the physical world. If man can't plumb the dimensions of the physical world, how can he possibly question God's activities in the moral world? Man just doesn't know enough, he just doesn't make enough observations of God in the physical creation about him.

'Well,' Job says, 'you are treating me cruelly and unjustly, it is not fair what you are doing to me.' 'Ah, Job, animals represent them, I care for everything, Job, including those that you would find undesirable. Some people need careful handling in order to be saved. In order to achieve this, sometimes the earth must suffer for the guilty, it happens in the animal world. It happens in the human world. God's purpose is a lot bigger than just you and me you see.' God's treatment of Job is for the salvation of others. It is not a personal animosity towards Job. Look what God is telling Job as he unfolds his explanation of creation. Job could never have dreamed of an answer like this, you see.

Well Ch 40, now, brings us to the conclusion of the first discussion between Yahweh and Job. V 1, Yahweh answers Job and says, "Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? He that reproveth God let him answer it." Job answers Yahweh and says, "I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no further." I've got nothing to add. Back in Ch 34:37, Elihu told Job that he had multiplied words against God. Job says here in v 5, 'I don't want to say another word, I've said way too much already.' But God speaks again. Even if Job's finished, God has not. God has only just begun, there is another speech coming. He hasn't finished, and the reason another speech is coming is because of this. God hasn't yet answered all Job's issues. He hasn't yet answered all the allegations that Job has made. He hasn't really dealt with, in fact, this whole

issue of righteousness and Job's desire for personal vindication. That hasn't actually been touched yet, so even if Job's finished speaking and doesn't want to say any more, God's got still more to say, you see.

V6, "Then answered Yahweh unto Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Gird up thy loins now like a man." Now that is just what he said in Ch 38, 'Job, don't sit down yet, we haven't finished. "Gird up your loins like a man, I will demand of thee and declare thou unto me." 'I am going to ask you questions now, and you better have answers, Job.' Well, it is going to get quite serious. "Wilt thou also disannul my judgment, wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?" Well, there's the issue. 'We still haven't dealt with this issue, Job, you think you are more righteous than me?' That's what we are going to deal with ahead, see? The next speech is going to deal with it. 'We haven't got to the bottom of my righteousness versus yours, Job. The discussion between us has still got to continue.'

Well, V 10, This is what God says to him. "Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency; and array thyself with glory and beauty. Cast abroad the rage of thy wrath: and behold every one that is proud and abase him." 'Don't just be angry, do something serious, Job. Remove the pride from proud people, look at everyone that is proud and bring him low, and tread down the wicked in his place. Hide them in the dust together, bind their face in secret. If you can do that, then I will also confess to thee that thine own right hand can save.' 'If you can do that, then you can achieve personal righteousness which might mean that I owe you something. But if you can't do this, if you can't control these most basic and strongest human emotions, you are not going to win this contest.' Well, he is scratching his head, brothers and sisters, and thinking, 'What is God about here? What is this supposed to mean?' And again, we've got a clue.

Look at v 10, You see, what we do is, we may not know the book of Job very well and we forget what has been said. God hasn't forgotten a word, He hasn't forgotten an emotion that has been said before. V 10 is an allusion to something. "Deck thyself now with majesty and excellence, array thyself with glory and beauty." God is referring to something that Job has said. You come back with me to Ch 29, Job said something in Ch 29 and God has pulled it up here in Ch 40 and he is going to take him to task about it, very specifically. Job 29:14, and the allusion to it in Ch 40:10. Ch 29:14, Job says, now remember this is the first chapter of the second of Job's monologues, where Job talks about what things were like before his suffering began. We looked at this last night. V 14, he says, "I put on righteousness and it clothed me, my judgment was as a robe and a diadem." It is interesting because God has just said to him, "Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency, array thyself with glory and beauty," now that's what he is referring to, Job clothed himself in righteousness, but God says, 'Fine, get dressed, show me your character at its best, stand before me and let me see it.' Job 29 is saying what was Job's past glory, look at how things were before all these calamities of God came upon him. Remember V 15? "I was eyes to the blind, I was feet to the lame, I was a father to the poor and the cause which I knew not, I searched out, I was a master of hospitality, and ecclesial welfare," that's what Job says, and it was true, V 17, "I brake the jaws of the wicked, and plucked the spoil out of his teeth." "I hated oppression and I dealt with it, summarily, I dealt with oppression.' V 18 "I said, I am going to die in my nest, I will multiply my days as the sand. My root was spread out by the waters, the dew lay upon my branch all night," he says, "my glory was fresh in me, my bow was renewed in my hand." 'I was like a great tree, sending its roots hither and thither, long life, my family spread out before me, that was my hope for the future.'

V 24, "If I laughed on people," 'if I smiled at them they believed it not, "the light of my countenance they cast not down." 'If I acknowledged people, they treasured it, that I had done this for them. I don't say that in an arrogant sense, but that's the reality of the position I held,' he says. Look, V 25, "I" and look at this carefully, "I chose out their way, I sat chief, I dwelt as a king, in the army, as one that comforts the mourners," he says. That's interesting. "I was a chief and I was a king." Now you come back to Ch 40, that is very interesting, 'I was a chief and I was a king.' Job Ch 40:19, here's the behemoth, I was a chief and I was a king,' says Job. In Ch 40:19, Of the behemoth, of the hippopotamus it says, "He is chief of the ways of God," so the behemoth's the chief. Job Ch 41: 34, "Behold, leviathan is king, over all the children of pride." So behemoth is chief and leviathan is king, so Job sat as a chief and a king, dressed in his self-righteousness.

Now we already know that animals represent people. Do you see what God is doing to Job, brothers and sisters? 'Job, which one are you? Which one are you? Well, let me tell you Job you are none of them, I've got another one for you, another animal for you. So what He is going to do here is he introduces two more animals, and you can read the characteristics of these animals yourselves. There's been some debate about is this really the elephant and not the hippopotamus, I think the hippopotamus fits best, is this really the crocodile or is it some kind of dinosaur, because you've got a reference here to smoke coming out of its nostrils? I actually think it is the crocodile and the smoke is probably steam coming out of the nostrils of the crocodile. Not too much mystery there. The point is, and this is the big point, this animal is invincible, and this animal is infinitely hostile. Can't be tamed, can't be marshalled, you cannot do anything with a crocodile. You start to think about the characteristics of the crocodile and well, release one in this room here and think about your reaction to it. Ok, the behemoth, the hippopotamus is the epitome of strength, look at Ch 40:16, He is the epitome of strength, "Lo now, his strength is in his loins, and his force is in the navel of his belly, I mean, what can't this animal push over, brothers and sisters? "He moveth his tail like a cedar, the sinews of his stones, or his thighs as it is, are wrapped together." An enormously powerful animal. Everything about him is powerful, you see, and he is immovable, nothing can intimidate him, and he lives in the river, and when the river floods, well, what does he do? When the river floods he leans into it, he opens his mouth and he drinks it down. And what if it floods as a tsunami? He opens his mouth wider and he drinks it down. And that is what he is like V 23, "Behold, he drinketh up the river and hasteth not, he trusted that he could draw up Jordan into his mouth." Now the reference here to Jordan has let people to think of the elephant, because there are no hippopotami in Jordan, but it says here that he can draw up Jordan, but Rotherhams says that 'he could draw up a Jordan.' It is actually a reference to the Nile hippopotamus just like this is a reference to the Nile crocodile, and the Nile hippopotamus could drink up A Jordan, an equivalent of A Jordan in his mouth, that's the point.

Well, how does this work? Well, I'll come back to that and I will show you something in a minute. Leviathan, here is the crocodile, the epitome of untrustworthiness, of aggression, of fear. Look at Ch 41:8 "Lay thy hand upon him, remember the battle, do no more." What does this mean? Touch him once, learn a lesson, don't touch him again. That's what it means isn't it? It is very clear, don't fool around with this animal. Do not fool around with this animal. V 14, "Who can open the doors of his face," now you know, if you get a crocodile and you close his mouth, you can put a rubber band around it and he can't open it. If you open his mouth there is nothing you can do to stop it shutting. An infinitely powerful bite on this animal. So you can't do it. V 15, "His scales are his pride, shut up together as with a close seal. Before the origin of guns, you could not get through the hide of a crocodile, you would have to turn him over to kill him, you couldn't get him through the top. Job 41:33, "Upon earth there is not his like who is made without fear." This is interesting, When Noah was told that he controlled creation when he got off of the Ark after the flood, he was told that all creation was subject to him. He could subdue everything, he could now eat the herb and he could also eat meat. All animals would run from him and for the most part, that is true. This fellow will not run from you, it is a fact, there are a lot of crocodiles and they are not scared of people, they will come and hunt you out. There is only maybe the crocodile and the polar bear perhaps that are similar, we don't have much contact with those because they only live in one place, but crocodiles are in a number of countries. Most animals, even lions and tigers, unless they are pushed for food, or need water, or unless you get in the way of them and their young, or something like that, where they are upset, they might attack you, otherwise they will steer clear of human kind. Crocodiles? They will come down the street, there is no question, they are not at all scared of people. Upon earth, nothing is like them, the scripture says. He will come looking for you and once he has got a taste of you, he will come back for more. This is amazing this animal, quite amazing. There is a key verse here, Ch 40:12, here is the key verse, he puts these two animals together and relates them to Job. Job 40:12, "Look upon every one who is proud, behemoth, and bring him low and tread down the wicked, leviathan, in his place," you see? These are the two animals that Job can't control, pride and sin, are part of his character, are part of his character.

Now how does this work? now look at this. Here's behemoth, he represents man, he's got a great strength, but he is not an especially violent animal. If you upset him, the hippopotamus will attack you, there is no question of that, and they do, but he doesn't run around trying to attack things, he just eats grass. He can endure great trial, but he wasn't a threat to people. Job had enormous resources to endure trial. He thinks he is better than he is, though, He's only got a little tail, very strong, but it is only a little tail, but it is like a propeller under water behind him to get rid of excrement and so forth, but he thinks that this tail is very big.

Job he glories in things of small account, in Ch 29 we read them, he's running the ecclesia, he's taking care of everything, he's benefactor of the ecclesial world in that part of the ecclesial world at least. But God says, 'Well, that's good, there is no problem with that, but listen, the bigger things of life pride and sin, you do not have them under control, any more than anybody else.' He's self-confident, he can move unmolested amongst predators, nothing can touch him, the hippopotamus, nothing could touch Job. He walked as a king he had an army of supporters, nothing could possibly touch Job. This hippopotamus lives in circumstances of pleasure and protection and comfort, it describes it there, exactly the same as Job, he remains confident in the midst of disaster, exactly the same as Job, and he is best overcome by stealth. The only way you can ever catch a hippopotamus is to trick him, don't try and take him when he is watching, the same with Job.

And the friends come to Job and say "boom," right in front of him he goes 'ping, ping.' God comes at him and says 'I will tell you a story, there's a riddle here, think hard about it, and Job is silenced completely. You see? Here's Job with the enormous resources of the hippopotamus and God says, 'That's you, I look at my creation and I see you like that, Job.' And hippos, they are not all bad, there are some good things, they were extremely powerful, and if marshalled in the right way, they could be extremely useful, but that wasn't all there was to Job, you see. That wasn't all there was to Job, because if the hippopotamus is dangerous, in his own way, this thing is Lethal, untameable, the crocodile, you can't touch it. Can't be bridled, can't be managed, can't be overcome, there is nothing you can do, do not try and use this animal for anything. You try and keep this thing as a pet, I mean, with pets we have, we develop relationships with pets, you know people keep savage dogs, and those dogs might attack everyone else in town but they won't attack the owner, this thing will attack the owner, there is no question, it will attack the owner. You think about the crocodile, they might be 25ft long, big salt-water crocodile, very big, 6 to 800 kg, like lethal things. And what do they do? Well you think about it, what do they do? Well, they just sit there with their eyes above the swamp, how long will they sit there? All day. Do they move? They don't even blink, You go too close, straight out of the water at you, And they will wait all day for you to come down to the river bank.

That's what sin is like, it lies dormant, it does nothing, and when you are watching it, it does nothing, it knows when it is being watched. You can walk around the edge of the river and you can watch it and when it sees you looking at it, it will do nothing, as soon as you go like this, it takes you, you see? Don't parley with sin. You can't control it. You can't tame it, you can't befriend it, it is not a pet. What do you do about this animal? All you can do is starve it. All you can do is starve it. The minute you try and feed it what, happens? It grows and inch bigger. Any lust that we have, you feed it, you give it any quarter, it will grow. Let me tell you the bigger they get, the more powerful they are.

'Job, can you control this? There's one been living inside you. You control that Job, if you can deal with that, you can put it down, then I will confess you can save yourself. Unless you can deal with that, forget it.' And look at him, he says here, this is a key verse here, Ch 41:10, "None is so fierce who dares stir him up, who then is able to stand before me?" 'If you can't control the crocodile, Job, how can you possibly answer me,' says God. 'Invincible to man, weapons are useless against him, he is a king on earth, absolutely he is the king on earth today as he has ever been, you see?' And God is now presenting Job with the final of the couples of animals, one which directly represents him is the hippopotamus and one, which in fact, represents all of us. The hippopotamus is a chief and the levitation here is the king over all the children of pride, and so the hippopotamus is pride, and this one here is the king of pride, he even rules pride. Sin is over everything, that's the point, you see? And what God has done here is give Job his final answer. Remember I told you, I go back here, we had one question yet to answer, we have the answer in the last speech of God. Job is proud. Job has helped the ecclesial world, but you know, there's a bit of satisfaction in that by Job, no that Job was bad, I mean understand, when we talk about Job like this, none of us are remotely like Job, but Job wasn't perfect, and there was a certain degree of pride in what he had done. He was unable to control sin, he couldn't subdue his tendencies and he couldn't save himself, he can't, but God can, and that's the point. And so salvation can only come by submission to the righteousness of God, and that's what Job had to learn. He was not more righteous than his maker. He could not do the things that God could do, and he had this animal living inside of him which in a very small way, only in a small way he had been feeding. There was a problem there you see. There was a problem.

Ch 42:1, "Job answered Yahweh and said, Oh, I know that thou canst do everything and that no thought can be withholden from thee. Thou sayest," and he is quoting God, "Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge," this is what God has just said to him "Therefore have I answered that I understood not, things too wonderful for me that I knew not," 'You are right,' he says to God, 'I have said things I should not have said.' "Hear I beseech thee and I will speak," God said. "I will demand of thee and declare thou to me." Job says to that, "Well I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye seeth thee. Wherefore, I abhor myself, in dust and ashes," he says. Now what does all of this mean? Well, look, I will show you, pretty simply, Here was his first answer that he gave to God's speech and here is the answer he gave to God's second speech. The first speech, Job answered and said, 'I am vile, what shall I answer. I lay my hand upon my mouth, once have I spoken and I won't speak again, I've got nothing more to say. ' Now that is very similar to what he says in the second speech. In the second speech, he quotes God's words back to God and then he adds something. He says, 'God can do everything' and then he quotes God's words back to God, then he restates what he said in the first speech, he quotes God's words back to God, and he adds something else. So these two pieces in red are the new information that Job has added in his second speech that he didn't say the first time round. And this is the key to it here. "I heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye seeth thee. As a result of that, I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." What does that mean, what does he mean when he says "I heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye seeth thee?" Well, cast your mind back, when he got to the climax of his argument in Job Ch 19, what did he say? "I know that my redeemer liveth." What does he say? "And that he shall stand in the latter day upon the earth and though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." I've seen him, you see? He's had his day in court, and he has now seen, not only the Shekinah glory above him but the character of God revealed to him. He says, I have now seen God, and far from vindicating me which is what I wanted back in Ch 19, he has put me back in the place I really belong. And I am very sorry to have seen myself compared to that. I repent. I abhor myself. It is pretty strong language, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

Well, brothers and sisters, the story is over, Job's now had his final answer from God, and a remarkable answer. V 7 of Job Ch 42, "It was so, that after Yahweh had spoken these words to Job, Yahweh says to Eliphaz the Temanite," Oh yes, they are still listening, "my wrath was kindled against thee and against thy two friends. Ye have not spoken to me that thing which was right as my servant Job has." Ok, a couple of points there. Firstly, clearly Job's argument has completely left the argument of the three friends behind, they look like immature children compared with Job. Look what God says about Job, "You have not spoken of me that thing which is right as my servant Job has." What did Job say that was right. Job said pages and pages of things that were not right, God winked at it, forget it. Why? You are suffering, it is out of character, forget it. All God has done here, you see, is Job had an almost perfect character, but there was one aspect in Job's character that which needed cleaning up, and so God removes everything else, and puts the magnifying glass on this little point, and expands it like that so Job can see it very clearly, so that everybody can see it. And lest the friends said, 'Ho, phew, we thought he was a bit of a hypocrite, we thought he was self-righteous,' God says, 'well between you and me Job, there is a gulf like this between you and me, but now we understand that, but now let's put things back in perspective. Now you friends.... There is a gulf like this between you and Job, much less between you and me. You haven't spoken that which is right like my servant Job. This is the infinite mercy of God, you know, a remarkable thing. God just winks at all the stuff that Job said, it was out of character, Job didn't really feel like this, he was driven to it by being pushed into a corner by his friends, he comes out all guns blazing, he sees now what he is up against and realises and there will be and improvement, therefore, in the character of Job because of this.

And Eliphaz, you've got something to answer for. V 8, "Take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams and go to my servant Job. Offer for yourselves a burnt offering and my servant Job will pray for you, and him will I accept lest I deal with you after your folly," lest I become the God of 'exact retribution,' and your stupidity meets an immediate response.' That was their folly wasn't it? this ridiculous doctrine of 'exact retribution,' 'Well, just be glad that that doctrine isn't true Eliphaz or you wouldn't be standing here much longer. And if you go and offer the offering, well, I will forgive you. You offer that sacrifice, Job will pray for you and I will forgive you.'

So V 9 So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went, and did according as Yahweh commanded them: and Yahweh also accepted Job.” I mean they were brethren, of course they did it, they learned something as well, didn’t they? And V 10, “Yahweh returned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends, and gave him twice as much as he had before. “And V 12, that means, 4,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, a thousand yoke of oxen, a thousand she-asses, I mean, everything was doubled and V 13, he had seven sons and three daughters. And he names the three girls in V 14, the names that you can see there, but there’s a problem isn’t there? Because he has only got ten children, he had ten children that he lost in Ch 1, what’s happened to them? Ah! People are different to animals, the first ten of course will be in the resurrection, Job will have twenty children, when he walks into the kingdom of God, but not just yet, not twenty children in the rest of this life-time. “In all of the land, there were none so fair as the daughters of Job” it says, and after this, V 16, Job lived 140 years. Well, if that is a doubling of life, perhaps it was that Job was 70 years old when these calamities fell upon him, by no means a long time in the truth. He saw his sons and his sons sons, even four generations. What does that say? He became a great tree, with roots spreading out to the waters and a great canopy over his family. So Job died, being old and full of days, at I suppose, 210 years old. A great man, brothers and sisters, became even greater, and as the divine author was to say, “Hast thou considered my servant Job.”

Transcription by Fay Berry 2017