

INTRODUCTION:

1. The Big Picture:

- a. Job is a book essentially built upon the same theological foundation as the Torah and Proverbs. Scholarly research dates Job with an early date of 2,000 BC and a later date of 1,000 BC. Thus, Job may in fact be one of the oldest Books in Scripture and as such may be foundational for the rest of wisdom literature. Job however deals in particular with the problem of pain and suffering in the world... the segment of Theology known as Theodicy... dealing with how a Good and Loving God can allow pain and suffering. The Book of Job asserts that one can act properly within the moral and ethical context of the Covenant with Yahweh and suffer anyway. Bummer! The “Theology of Success” often presumed by Old Testament Jews and the “Prosperity Gospel” presumed by many contemporary Christians, crashes upon the rocks of a difficult reality expressed in Job, where God’s blessed also find suffering and difficulty. Jesus taught His disciples that they would have trouble in the world, but He brought them encouragement that He has overcome the world (John 16:33).
- b. Job confronts us with the interesting question of cause and effect... Why do we do what we do? Is our action focused on our temporal gain or for our enduring benefit? Job’s friends utilized conventional theology of “blessing wisdom” and therefore concluded that Job had sinned which caused his fall from God’s grace and the resulting suffering he was enduring was payback. They pronounced Job guilty without any real knowledge of Job’s heart or of God’s purpose. They adjudicated the effect [Job’s suffering] resulted from a presumed cause [his sin]. Many Christians make the same mistake today presuming bad things happen to those who are outside of God’s will. The decoupling of cause and effect in life on Fallen earth as found in the book of Job raises probing questions for all God’s people on how we should live our life in light of eternity, in trusting God’s heart and His Goodness rather than our own understanding (Proverbs 3:5-6).
- c. Christians today still often judge their brothers and sisters based on what we observe. The message of Job is based on the realization that we cannot really know what is going on the heart of a man – only God knows what is in a man’s heart [2 Corinthians 5:12; Proverbs 27:19]. As a result, we should be much more interested in offering Grace as consolation to those in need, affliction, or in despair. The New Testament imperative is stated in Matthew 7:2 – “For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” While not necessarily a “quid-pro-quo” [this for that] transactional approach to theology, it does raise the question of mercy and fairness.
- d. Zondervan’s Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible provides this explanation of God’s inherent Goodness:
 - i. In the Bible, the supreme good is never a matter of speculation, as it was in ancient Greek philosophy. In the Bible, “good” is considered as happiness, pleasure, knowledge, etc. God Himself is *The Good*; and there is no good apart from Him. He is the source of all goodness.

No one can know *The Good* unless he knows God in a right relationship and does His expressed will. “No one is good but God alone” (Mark 10:18).

- ii. Since God is good, all that He does is necessarily good. He declared His own creation good (Gen 1). The disorder, disruption, evil, and sin that now prevail throughout His world are the result of the rebellion of moral beings originally created good.
 - iii. God’s revelation of Himself in history was an increasing revelation of His goodness. He made man in His image for fellowship with Himself. Even when Adam flouted Him in the Fall, God’s loving interest continued; He showed His goodness by immediately taking steps to undo the disastrous effects of the Fall. His election of Israel as His people, the Exodus, the giving of the law, His many deliverances of Israel, the promise and preparation for the coming of the Messiah—all these were evidences of God’s goodness; as were the Incarnation, the atoning death of His Son, the resurrection, Pentecost... the giving of the Spirit.
 - iv. The Scriptures make clear that history is not haphazard, but that God is working out a plan in history—the consummation of all things in His Son Jesus Christ. In this plan, God’s children have an important part (Ephesians 1). Someday His goodness will be acknowledged by all of His creation; and He will be all in all.
 - v. Because of the Fall, man is by nature corrupt and is capable of doing nothing that is really good (Romans 7), but because of God’s provision in Christ and the Holy Spirit, he can live a life of obedience to and fellowship with his creator.
- e. **Job concludes that God alone is God, and that man is incapable of understanding God’s methods or purposes. In the end, we have a choice – to trust God or not. We trust God in our hope for our ultimate gain, and we doubt Him to our peril. My niece and I have had many conversations about the Christian faith. She struggles constantly with the problems of the pain and suffering she sees around her. While she has been raised within a Christian home, she cannot help but hold God responsible for the world’s social and cultural troubles. She feels that God ought to intervene in such a miraculous fashion that no one on earth could doubt God’s existence or His purpose. She has argued, “If God is all loving and good, *why*...” and there is no adequate response to her argument. It is the timeless question of the faithful and the faithless – for those who believe no proof is necessary; while for those who do not believe, no proof will suffice.**
- f. **Two thousand years ago God answered the question of God’s Goodness in the person and work of Jesus the Messiah [Christ]. Something utterly amazing occurred within the context of recordable history, and two thousand years later we are still discussing and debating about it. For me, the most compelling proof of the Truth of Jesus and His resurrection is in the recorded nature of the men who accompanied Jesus and knew Him best. Something extraordinary happened to them between the conclusion of the gospels and the Book of Acts. They went from spineless and defeatist followers, to fearless and determined leaders who willingly went to their**

deaths proclaiming the Truth of Jesus as the Resurrected Christ – the final answer and revelation of God’s covenant love.

- g. People do not willing die for what they know to be a lie, and reportedly a million and a half Jews perished in the persecutions that followed Jesus’ death. Josephus [a Jewish scholar and Roman historian] recorded this persecution along with other scholars who witnessed these events. I was not there, but I am confident that human nature has not changed dramatically in two thousand years. My conclusion is that Jesus rose from the dead and is who He claimed to be... God incarnate. Those who saw Him and followed Him knew the Truth, and they willingly chose the eternal truth of God and the physical suffering that followed, rather than denounce their faith.
- h. The Spiritual encounters in Job demonstrate great finesse by the author who is literally opening a window into the Spiritual Realm so the reader can understand what the participants in the story do not... that there is more going on in the Spiritual realm than what is obvious or apparent in the physical reality we observe. The Book of Job poses the dilemma... we think we know, but we don’t; we want to understand, but we can’t; it is beyond our comprehension and remains so without the revelation of God. Ultimately, the prophetic vision revealed in Job is based upon compassion, born through pain, resulting in a renewed vision where hope is revealed that results in eternal certainty.
- i. In understanding the impact of Wisdom Literature, it is helpful to see it in light of our modern educational process in the USA:
 - i. Proverbs is comparable to Middle School.
 - ii. Psalms is comparable to High School.
 - iii. Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs are comparable to Undergraduate College.
 - iv. Job is comparable to Graduate School.

2. INTRODUCTION:

- a. Historicity and Ministry:
 - i. The context of the book of Job describes life in the patriarchal era in the region of Uz, a large territory east of the Jordan north of Edom. It bears similarity with the patriarch Abram’s calling in the land of Ur that is identified with the Chaldeans. Abram [Abraham] lived in the Bronze age around 2,400 BC. Job likely lived later around 2,000 BC. Biblical literary references to Abram and Job generally reflect what we know as life in the Patriarchal era.
 - ii. The book presents an object lesson in theology that humanity has responsibility to do what they know to be right and being committed to establish justice even when it appears that God allows injustice. This ideal finds its presentation in the New Testament in James 4:17 – “Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.”
 - iii. Job’s problem with the evil of pain & suffering is presented in the 1st 2 chapters, and then is unpacked in the following 40 chapters. The celestial battle behind the physical drama is

being played out in history as Job's family, wealth and health are destroyed in short order. Then there comes the labored interaction Job had to endure from his friends which brings even more pain instead of consolation for Job. As a modern-day ministry paradigm, it is important to listen and hear people's pain... knowing we can rarely solve their problems, but we certainly can comfort them by listening, so they know they are heard and are not alone. As ministers, we can remind people of Grace and hope which is a Christian's birthright as an indwelt child of God. Moving people away from fear and despair toward confidence and hope is always a good thing. Job's friends began well by just sitting quietly with their friend for seven days, then they failed Job by judging him based upon their own flawed understanding.

b. Genre:

- i. Typical of wisdom literature, Job is written in poetry. This means the text communicates in imagery intended to evoke an emotional response rather than a literal one. Narrative and story tend to be more literal and you can take the words at face value; interpreting poetry requires a different interpretive paradigm. The beginning lines of Job are similar to Judges 17 and 1 Samuel 1, which refer to a time in history. The use of poetry especially in the dialogues provides an elevated emotional approach with a more universal application. Job thus becomes a model for all of humanity.
- ii. Job is considered the pinnacle of wisdom literature – combining the wisdom of proverbs, the devotion of Psalms [especially 119], the plaintive assessment of human weakness in Ecclesiastes, and integrating them into a dependent faith in God.
- iii. Though written as poetry, Job includes literary elements of lament, epic, theater, comedy, and tragedy. The plaintive reasoning and responses developed in the dialogues are reminiscent of law debates.

c. Author and Date:

- i. The author is clearly a literary genius. Despite the primitive poetic language and its utilitarian shortcomings, the author presents an amazing treatise on God's Sovereignty amid human ignorance and weakness. While God's purposes are not knowable, humanity can trust Him to ultimately be fair and good.
- ii. The author writes prophetically peering into the Heavenly Court and relating events to ignorant humanity. It is incredible that the reader understands the Spiritual backdrop that the characters do not until the end of the book. Job and his friends discuss creation and human experience in their rhetorical speeches. The engaging conversation forces Job higher and higher up the mountain of God and above the valley of human ignorance. Job is sure of God's Character; he is equally sure of his own character... while he doesn't understand why things are happening
- iii. Date of authorship is likely before Moses wrote the Pentateuch. It may also be based upon an earlier composition that Solomon repurposed and rewrote when he was

assembling and writing much of the wisdom literature in around 970 BC. The poetic storyline depicted in Job takes place during the Era of the Patriarchs, somewhere around 2,000 BC, about 500 years before Moses and the Pentateuch.

- iv. The earlier writing of the book is validated in that much of the language employed in Job is actually somewhat obscure, meaning:
 - 1. Some of the Hebrew is actually unintelligible because it includes unknown words that may have come from another language source, or an earlier form of the book.
 - 2. Dozens of words used in Job occur nowhere else in the Old Testament.
 - 3. Scholars have identified some of the language sources that include Akkadian, Arabic, Aramaic, Sumerian, and Ugaritic.
- v. An analysis of God's response to Job in chapters 38-41 are closely aligned with Job's lament presented in chapter 3. This indicates the book is an integrated whole that was conceived and interwoven by a single author, rather than a number of redactors or editors.

3. STRUCTURE:

- a. Noted theologian Bruce Waltke observed that the biography of Job is developed in accordance with what is known as ancient "Contest Literature" where the protagonist and antagonist engage in a duel of rhetoric [oratory speech making] rather than logic [debate] to win their argument. As the story argument develops, the contest revolves around disputed approaches to reason out the problem, with the conclusion revealing the winner of the dispute. The winner in the book of Job is clearly God.
- b. 5 Part Structure – Professor Brian Morgan:
 - i. Prologue – 1:1-2:13 – the heavenly court is displayed as the backdrop while God's faithful mortals persevere in faith regarding God's goodness and justice, even though they are tested to extreme limits.
 - ii. The Elder's Dialogues – 3:1-31:40 – three "cycles" of Job's "friend's" arguments display their limited understanding and their limited love for Job:
 - 1. 4:1-14:22 – 1st cycle of speeches
 - 2. 15:1-21:34 – 2nd cycle of speeches
 - 3. 22:1-26:14 – 3rd cycle of speeches
 - 4. 27:1-23 – Job's closing argument
 - iii. The Young Man's Dialogue – 32:1-37:24 – Elihu's 4 speeches represents the younger generation's attempt to solve the problem his elders were unable to. Of particular interest is the circumspect approach Elihu begins with compared to the older friends.
 - iv. Theophany and Job's responses – 38:1-42:6 – God asks probing questions of Job, rather than giving an explanation as Job would otherwise expect. Job's response is circumspect.
 - 1. It is apparent that Job is not in control... in a philosophical narrative human reason and rhetoric are in control; in poetry you ask questions seeking answers and are

- open to experience wonder... poetry leads to an experience, not merely to an idea.
2. God reveals that He has bounded “evil” with “good” and that there is more than sufficient reason to trust God in spite of the mystery of human suffering.
 3. Job started well in this story, then challenges God to explain Himself to Job’s satisfaction.
 4. Job comes back to repenting of his error and audacity... he chooses wisely to trust God.
- v. Conclusion – 42:7-17 – God commends Job’s honesty, then God restores Job and uses him to restore his 3 friends... and this is just like God!
1. The author presents Job’s understanding as the result of an existential experience, that Job still doesn’t fully understand.
 2. The author leads the reader into an understanding based on revelation of Spiritual mystery and divine truth beyond human awareness.
 3. While Job goes on with the rest of his life, the reader is challenged to make sense of the drama in terms of understanding their own life and circumstances.
 4. Job is an early example of the “forgiveness cycle” – see Spiritual Formation/Spiritual Disciplines/Prayer Practicum 9 – Forgiveness & Prayer... there are five successive components involved in forgiveness, they are:
 - a. Conviction – The Spirit breaks through human defenses and I agree I’m in error.
 - b. Remorse – I’m genuinely sorry for the wrong I’ve committed... first in my relationship with God, secondly with others.
 - c. Repentance – I’m aware and apologize of my failure and I’m committed that I would do things differently in the future.
 - d. Restoration – The step past apology is the desire and attempt to make things right with those I’ve wronged.
 - e. Reconciliation – The relationship is restored, and relational intimacy is restored.
- c. Reflective/Reflexive Structure:
- A – Opening narrative – chapters 1-2
 - B – Job’s opening monologue – chapter 3
 - C – The friends dispute Job – chapters 4-28
 - B’ – Job’s closing monologue – chapters 29-31
 - C’ – Elihu disputes Job – chapters 32-37
 - C’’ – God disputes Job – chapters 38:1-42:6
 - A’ – Closing narrative – 42:7-17
- d. Dialogue Summation:
- i. Chapters 1-2 – The narrator sets the stage of what is occurring in the greater heavenly

scheme of things.

- ii. Chapters 3-31 – Job’s friends take turns accusing Job and Job defends himself... the friends seek to prove Job wrong, and Job seeks to prove himself right.
- iii. Chapters 32-37 – Elihu speaks for God... desiring to prove God right.
- iv. Chapters 38-41 – God speaks for Himself... proving Himself to be Right.
- v. Chapter 42 – note the 5-point forgiveness cycle of conviction, remorse, repentance, restoration, reconciliation – [for more see Spiritual Formation/Spiritual Disciplines/Prayer Practicum 9 – Forgiveness & Prayer]:
 - 1. Verses 1-6... Job is convicted, is remorseful, and repents of his arrogance in questioning God’s motives and doubting God’s Character.
 - 2. Verses 7-17... are the narrator’s epilogue of Job’s restoration and reconciliation.

4. MAIN THEMES DEVELOPED IN JOB

- a. The book deals directly with intensely important issues including:
 - i. Pain and Suffering – the operant paradigm is that God rewards righteousness and punishes wickedness. Why then do righteous people suffer? Why do wicked people seem to prosper? The answer in Job is not simple, nor is it always obvious. Sometimes we don’t understand it until we enter eternity and God makes it known.
 - ii. Theodicy – can God be completely righteous and just if He allows innocent people to suffer? Though most of Scripture tends to focus on the problem of “free will” and “fallen humanity,” Job explores the unseen and unknown Spiritual implications of good and evil in the Heavenly realm and humanities responsible to trust and follow God even when we don’t understand (Ephesians 6:12).
 - iii. Wisdom – what is the means of attaining wisdom to live a Godly and materially/spiritually successful life? Are covenantal Law and moral & ethical maxims an adequate gauge of satisfying God? Is obedience all that’s necessary or are other factors involved, such as loving God and remaining relationally dependent upon Him?
 - iv. Divine purpose and life expectations – how do we respond properly when we are overwhelmed and assailed by unimaginable difficulties? How do we walk with and respond to others around us who endure pain and suffering?
- b. While creedal assertions are helpful tools for discipleship, sometimes we need to ask further questions. Wisdom and worship literature make it clear that God has no problem with humanity complaining and venting their problems of pain and suffering and imploring God to act on our behalf. Job also makes it clear that we can ask questions of other issues knowing God will hear us and respond when appropriate... such as:
 - i. God’s nature –
 - 1. Is God truly Good? Or is there a “dark side” as some assert? Humanity lives in an historical timeline, and in a variable “shades of grey world.” God and eternity are

outside of history, and everything is black or white.

2. Is God truly Omnipotent? Meaning He is all powerful and can do anything that is not in conflict with His Goodness.
 3. Is God Omnipresent? Meaning He is everywhere and in everything all the time.
- ii. Personal responsibility – are Job’s friends completely wrong? No one is sinless, and all are capable of intentional or unintentional acts that may have negative impacts on ourselves as well as upon others. Humanity as “Free-Will agents” have the right to choose to do God’s work or not, to do what is right, moral and ethical or not... and bear responsibility for our choices and our actions.
 - iii. Personal rewards and punishment – life is not a “quid-pro-quo” [this for that] legalistic proposition. We often derive benefits we didn’t deserve, as well as suffering harm from actions of others we didn’t deserve. Was Job’s reinstatement and ultimate blessing a result of Job’s humility before God, and of God’s satisfaction that Job’s contrition and steadfast heart? Was Job a victim or a model of ethical/moral behavior... an archetype for all humanity? Yes, and yes, I think.
- c. There is no easy answer to these questions, and platitudes [highly subjective; trite, banal, or pithy buzzwords] bring little satisfaction to the person who is suffering. Life is full of danger and there are always choices to be made... in addition to those posed above, there are definitely other thoughts to ponder:
- i. The structure of Job demonstrates that the logic of the friends and even of Job is wrong. The labored reasoning is ultimately futile. God finally leads Job into an understanding that humanity knows little of the great Spiritual battle we are caught up in. Similarly, Ecclesiastes concludes that reason is futile, and we may as well accept what God provides and try to make the best of things. Psalms concludes that to experience God is to know He is good, and God is shown to be trustworthy regardless of our fears – Job and David knew their Redeemer lives and put their faith and hope in God (Job 19:25; Psalms 19:14).
 - ii. What is the ultimate role of Satan? If God challenged Satan that Job was unassailable, what does this say as to the nature of Spiritual warfare? The New Testament answers this proposition in the book of Ephesians where a Christian’s identity is based on the emerging character of God in each believer... being born again is the start of a lifelong emerging life of Christ that develops in each believer.
 - iii. Why were only the three friends and Job rebuked by God? Wasn’t Job’s wife, Elihu, and even Satan also worthy of rebuke? It is obviously important that Job accepted God’s rebuke which led to not only his own restoration but also that of his friends. As an archetype, it would seem reasonable that our acceptance of responsibility before a righteous God opens the way for the restoration not only of ourselves, but also of those closest to us.
 - iv. God’s revelation of the beasts “Behemoth” (Job 40:15-24) and “Leviathan” (Job 41:1-34)

would again seem to refer to a larger Spiritual battle that we are caught up in pointing toward Apocalyptic types of beasts.

- d. Scripture must be evaluated in terms of itself, and the fact that thematic strains began early in the Old Testament are continued to be developed until they find their conclusion in the New Testament... especially in the Person and ministry of Jesus.

5. **THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF MAIN THEMES OF JOB** – the themes and questions raised above are better explored in the larger context of Scripture. Prominent Christian Theologians have much to say regarding these concepts. Interestingly, they begin with Job’s basic view of God as an Omniscient and Omnipotent, and Sovereign... yet who is truly concerned about all of His creatures.

- a. The Universal Theme of Suffering and Theodicy – A theodicy is a response to the evidential problem of evil, and specifically the challenge that the occurrence of evil in the world counts as evidence against the existence of an omnipotent [all powerful] and omnibenevolent [all good] God.

- i. Different ancient Christian approaches to Theodicy:

- Augustine of Hippo was a Christian theologian who lived from AD 354 to 430.

- “Augustinian Theodicy” argues that evil does not exist except as a corruption of the goodness that God created and for which Satan and humanity were responsible. Augustine argued therefore that God did not create evil, Satan and humanity as his patsy corrupted Creation... which is why Creation ultimately will be destroyed and remade.

- 1. Irenaeus was a second century AD church leader and renown theologian.

- “Irenaeian Theodicy” explained the existence of evil as necessary for human development. Irenaeus argued that human creation comprised two parts: humans were made first in the image, and then in the likeness of God. The image of God refers to having the potential to achieve moral perfection, whereas the likeness of God refers to the potential achievement of that perfection. To achieve moral perfection, Irenaeus suggested that humans must have free will. Without free will, humanity cannot be held responsible for moral and ethical choices. Also, to achieve free will, humans must experience suffering and God must be at an epistemic distance (a distance of knowledge) from humanity. This distance is bridged by faith. Irenaeus concluded that evil exists to allow humans to develop as individual moral-ethical agents who are responsible before God for their actions and choices.

- ii. Different contemporary approaches to Theodicy:

- 1. In contrast to the Christian’s Theological approach to understanding the nature of God and the nature of evil, Secular Humanists promote the concepts of “Cosmodicy” which attempts to justify the fundamental goodness of the universe

in the face of evil, and “Anthropodicy” which attempts to justify the fundamental goodness of human nature in the face of the evils produced by humans. To the secular humanist “Good” and “Evil” are not states of being, but rather outcomes of choices... in other words, humanity doesn’t need God to be good, moral or ethical.

2. Secular legal arguments center on the difference between “spontaneous & unintentional” acts and “purposeful & intentional” acts where evil as defined by society is purposefully planned and executed. Legal decisions of innocence or guilt may satisfy the requirements of the law, but they do little to solve the problem of one’s conscience. Ultimately, to achieve the state of being good we need to cleanse our conscience... we need a redeemer.
- iii. Many Contemporary Christian Theologians often conclude that God is not casual to or unaffected by human suffering. Repeatedly throughout Scripture we observe God’s concern for the suffering of humanity in general and His people in particular, which causes Him to act. The greatest example of this action being Jesus the Messiah coming in the flesh to suffer and die to redeem humanity.
 1. For a more contemporary approach to Theodicy, many suggest the more appropriate question to ask instead of “why do the righteous suffer” is a more fundamental assertion posed by Satan... “why are the righteous pious?” This is the question Satan asked God in Job 1:9-11
“Does Job fear God for nothing?” Satan replied. “Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face.”
The reader is given this insight at the beginning of the Book of Job, but Job and his friends are unaware of it. It raises the question – Is our motivation simply to receive blessing from God? Or is it an inner desire for love and obedience to God because He is God? If the former, then Satan is somewhat vindicated because of his rebellion. If the later, Satan is condemned by lowly humanity who do as frail and imperfect beings what he would not do. This is the theological back-story of Job.
 2. Pain and suffering are a common component of all of humanity, but it was not always so. The Fall changed the way humanity, creation, and God were to interact. Job’s story of a man stripped of his preferred status suffers not as one of humanities worst moral-ethical examples, but instead as its best. The Book of Job reveals that Job suffered most from his protests and his friend’s arguments; and concludes that God is neither limited nor evil but instead is Sovereign and Good beyond mere human understanding.
 3. The application of this conclusion in Job forces humanity beyond the question of

“why am I expected to suffer?” to instead consider “what am I supposed to do when I suffer?” With this in mind, the argument [line of reasoning] revealed in Job is:

- a. When calamity strikes, remain faithful and patient as long as possible.
- b. It is appropriate to pray, and event to complain... God can handle tough questions of what, why, and how.
- c. When my patient strength fails, let anger and grief direct me to God... because only in relationship with Him can my tension be resolved, and my strength renewed.

b. Appealing to God for Divine Justice:

- i. God places Job on what amounts to “a universal cosmic stage” with an implied purpose to prove Satan wrong. Where Lucifer had only blessing in Heaven with God, he lost it in his rebellion against God. In Job we see everything that Satan is not, and even in Job’s distress in the 1st 2 chapters, he doesn’t sin and continues to love God amid his suffering and not only because of his previous state of blessing. From this perspective, Satan’s condemnation of Job fails. Then we have the friends coming to console Job – and Job’s patient endurance wears thin and his endurance fails.
- ii. Martin Buber suggests a correlation between Job and Psalm 73... Buber suggests that the question for Job is not “why do the good not prosper” but rather “why do the wicked prosper?” According to Buber, the underlying Biblical view is that all things ultimately come from or are permitted by God. Hence, the question Job is asking God isn’t “why does God permit me to suffer these things” but rather “why does God make me suffer these things?” There are essentially three views:
 1. The Dogmatic view of cause and effect – suffering point to sin and God’s displeasure. At question is the reasonable and rational nature of God... Who continues to love humanity in spite of their rebellion.
 2. The dependent relational view of unjust results – Job has trouble reconciling his suffering which he knows to be unjust. At question is the plaintive plea of Job to enlist God’s intervention against the problems God has allowed. Job knows that his friends who are siding with God, are not really contending for the true God... as they speak in terms of “religion” while Job is speaking as God’s servant and friend. Friends don’t allow what Job is experiencing to occur. Job doesn’t doubt God’s friendship, but he doesn’t understand God’s seeming ambivalence.
 3. The divine justice view presented by God Himself – God’s speech doesn’t just promote “The divine justice” as a quid-pro-quo cause and effect of religion. Instead God promotes “A divine justice” – that is manifested in creation. In this view, God as Creator gives to each that which God decrees to belong to each person. Life is a gift and all we experience is a gift; the result of this mystery is

how God makes each of us uniquely who He created us to be. The problem of “why” is exchanged for the wonder of “what” and “how.”

- a. There is an inborn justice of creation that is less demanding, more generous, and more liberating than man’s ideas of religion. Religion is foundationally a means to an end. What God offers humanity is a relationship... to walk with us through life’s ups and downs, triumphs and tragedies. It is relational communion.
- b. Job unsuccessfully tried to fight through the relational remoteness of what his friends false comforting was all about... their perceived idea of a distant God that demanded obedience and perfection. Instead, when God drew close to Job, he found a relationship that took him past his pain into a new future that transcended his previous life experience.
- iii. The conclusion is that man fails when he tries to emulate God’s justice. Our idea of justice is too restrictive, and our own understanding too small and incapable of realizing God’s ultimate justice. In the Old Testament blessing was seen in terms of prosperity in the material world. In the New Testament blessing is seen as eternal happiness with God in Heaven. The prophetic view of Job looks to a much bigger and better covenant of blessing born in the self-sacrifice of God Himself.
- c. The Poetry of Job as a Window into the Mind and Heart of God:
 - i. Many theologians argue that Job is more than an explanation about Theodicy. In this view, the key issue revolves around God’s chosen relationship to humanity. The concept here is that Job and the rest of humanity can handle anything as long as God is there with us.
 - ii. This argument extends from the fact that God cared enough for humanity to reveal Himself in creation [general revelation], and in Scripture [specific revelation]; and because of God’s Self-Revelation in Scripture, there is not only power in the Word of God, but there is a window into the Mind and Heart of God through it. Literary use of narrative which communicates in story and reason lets us hear some of the Mind of God, and poetry which communicates with imagery and emotion lets us hear some of the Heart of God. This approach makes Scripture all the more exciting and interesting to delve into, and also the study of hermeneutics all the more important for modern day disciples to recognize the types of Genre and how Scripture communicates.
 - iii. This view gives explanation to Job’s refusal to accept his wife’s advice to “curse God and die.” Robert Alter explains that instead of a “death wish” Job is invited to see a “more panoramic [view] of the vastness of life.” While suffering will occur, there is still life with God in the midst of it and beyond it. In this perspective, the message of Job is “life plus faith equals hope which leads to love.”
 - iv. In this view the poetry in Job was an instrument for probing the depths of humanities

own understandable sense of outrage over what happened to a righteous man, and gain a glimpse beyond the “here and now material world” and the “common plight of humanity” to be drawn into an immense world of “God’s presence, power and beauty” in the “Spiritual Supernatural” realm where God exists.

d. The Book of Job as a Spiritual Biography:

- i. Theologians Bruce Waltke and Thomas Dailey take a more personalized view of the book of Job and suggest it to be a Spiritual biography about the path to wisdom. It is a transcendent experience where Job begins as the most righteous man on earth, and is transformed through Spiritual and human encounters to become the wisest man on earth. In this light the conclusion of Job being the one who redeems his friends makes more sense.
- ii. Job’s journey begins with the elementary prologue of chapters 1 & 2 – which clarify the nature of the covenant relationship between God and His people. Job is seen here as an idealist following the standard wisdom of the day that blessings demonstrated righteousness.
- iii. Job’s journey progresses into high school and college chapters 3-31 – as he is being challenged to become wise.
- iv. Job gets some counter-cultural counsel – chapters 32-37 – from his young friend who shows him it’s not about you... it’s all about God.
- v. Job’s journey climaxes with God’s speech addressing Job as a Graduate Student – chapters 38-42:6 – where Job humbly accepts God’s rebuke and repents.
- vi. On the Journey main issues develop:
 1. It questions the relational ground of piety and morality.
 2. Do the pious love, trust, serve, and fear God for His intrinsic worthiness? Or do they do so for their own self-interest because they love their blessings of earthly possessions?
 3. Do they obey and serve God for the blessings He provides in this life? Or do they have sufficient relational connection to trust, worship, and obey God even if their earthly possessions and comforts are lost or denied?
 4. A covenant commitment is a relational contract that bind parties together. Although the reader is made aware of what was going on behind the scenes, the tale indicates that Job doesn’t know. The development of Job’s character begins in a trusting relationship but ends with an even closer experience with God Himself. The former condition was a very good thing; the latter condition is an amazingly wonderful thing.
 5. The context of Job’s relationship with God is similar to the other Patriarchs being based upon General Revelation [Psalm 119; Romans 1:18-32], rather than upon Israel’s Specific Revelation [Scripture] and covenants [Mosaic & Sinai].

6. BRIEF EXEGESIS OF JOB:

a. Prologue Chapters 1-2:

- i. 1:1 – “Blameless and Upright” does not mean without sin... the author of Job is not declaring Job sinless, but rather as “righteous” within the context of General Revelation. This is essentially what Paul is writing about in Romans 1:18-32. For Job to become mature, he will need to see clearly the conflicted order within creation as Paul presents in Romans 2:1-16; and Job 38:1-41:34.
- ii. 1:8 – “Blameless and Upright” though this is a repeat of 1:1, it is now ascribed as being true by God.
- iii. “Blameless” and “Upright” mean that Job’s moral and ethical character and his steadfast devotion to God were exemplary. We know that God holds a moral and ethical standard for humanity, and conventional wisdom stated that all who properly held to God’s standard would be blessed.
- iv. It is important to understand that while God upholds a moral & ethical standard that each individual is individually responsible before God as free-will agents within the context of their circumstances. The relationship between God and humanity is not closed, because other influences come into play including other people and spiritual agents. In the end however, God’s Sovereign purposes will be fulfilled (Romans 8:28).

b. The Dialogues between Job and his Peers – chapters 3-31:

- i. 3:1-26 – Job initiates the ensuing dialogues by stating that creation is not necessarily “good.” Job’s friends provide an alternative conclusion echoing Job’s wife that Job is receiving what he deserves. The friends base their arguments on 3 inadequate epistemic principles:
 1. 4:12-21 – Eliphaz makes an appeal to mystical experience that no man can be righteous and wise; he agrees with Satan that humanity is foolish and self-centered.
 2. 5:27; 8:8-10 – the friends base their authority on the traditions of the wise having learned through history what God requires. Job’s personal experience is seen through the historical norm, not the Spiritual reality Job is experiencing.
 3. “Reaping what you sow” is a reasonable conclusion in a closed system but reaping “only what you sow” is unreasonable in an open system... where Job proves that all suffering is not based solely on wrong doing.
- ii. 4:6; cross reference 42:7 – the friends view reality in a quid-pro-quo [this for that] legal reductionism and fail to consider God’s Sovereignty and an open system where other factors may affect an outcome. To sustain their argument, they assume sins that Job has not committed. When this fails, they up the accusation of Job’s endless sins – 22:4.
 1. Zophar rightly acknowledges that God is inscrutable... and seems to approach what will be revealed as divine resolution in that mortals are not privy to divine

knowledge – 11:7-9.

2. Eliphaz also rebukes Job for implying he knew what God was doing – 15:7-8a.
- iii. 6:2-13 – Job knows that God has allowed what has overtaken him, and he proclaims his complaint against God and his friends.
- iv. 6:8-10 – Job’s starting place is unsettling – his friends speak what they don’t know to defend God’s goodness and justice, but they clearly don’t know or won’t believe Job’s innocence. By justifying themselves rather than loving Job they prove themselves to be unfaithful both to Job and to God.
- v. 7:1-6 – Job’s honesty is refreshing in an era where we fail to speak plainly what is hurting or troubling us. Job’s experiences and pain are due to his suffering in spite of his innocence... not unlike the complaints of Israel in Egypt and in Babylon.
- vi. Chapter 9 – Job faith begins to vacillate... he now expresses doubt that God will give him a fair hearing; but in 17:1 Job is certain he’ll be heard and vindicated. Job’s faith is now going beyond what his friends can understand... as a result of his endurance and steadfast loyalty to God.
- vii. 9:1-35 – Job knows God is Omniscient [everywhere all at once], God is also seen as Omnipotent [capable of doing anything – Luther focused on this], and also that God was Sovereign [in complete control – Calvin focused on this]. Without Loving Kindness and Faithfulness to His people, God could be seen as all-powerful yet emotionally and relationally distant... instead of being creative, purposeful and ordering, He would be guilty of destructiveness and disorder. Praise of such a being would be an affront to God.
- viii. 9:14-20 – before such a judge, the prosecutor would always prevail.
- ix. 9:21-24 – before such a Lord there would be no observable moral & ethical order.
- x. 10:3-7; 40:8 – before such a Lord, wickedness would be acceptable.
- xi. 10:8-17 – living before such a Lord is absurd to Job... and the only escape in such a circumstance is death... the release of pain and suffering when joy is no longer possible.
- xii. 13:16-19 – by making such a plain complaint in emotional distress and vulnerability, Job is no longer the doubter. Instead he is confident that God will eventually vindicate him.
- xiii. 13:23-24 – there is no guarantee of justice in the present, or even in the future unless God indeed hates wickedness and rewards righteousness. This is the logic of a covenant theologian who knows God’s heart.
- xiv. 14:12-17 – Job prophetically reaches for ultimate justice, and a hope beyond sin and death... a redemption that infers individual resurrection. In this view, death is “sleep” [14:12]; and God’s anger against sin is for a limited time only [14:13]. If death is limited, people can live in hope [14:14] and would revive when they heard God’s wakeup call [14:15].
- xv. 17:11b-12a – Job proclaims that “I know my redeemer lives” – and “from by flesh [physical body] I shall see God.”

- xvi. 21:4 [CR James 5:11] – with this profession, Job ceases to doubt and becomes patiently persevering... deciding to persist in faith.
- c. Elihu's Dialogue – chapters 32-37:
 - i. Elihu is seen as an adjudicator rather than a protagonist like the other 3 friends. In this light Elihu is seen as the next generation of wise men [sages] who wrestle with the problem of Theodicy from general revelation apart from God's special revelation [Scripture] yet to be disclosed.
 - ii. 36:4 – Elihu seems to start well but soon presumes to speak from "perfect knowledge" essentially as God's ambassador, however he fails to break from a human perspective in his argument. Such a boast demonstrates his lack of understanding. Afterward, God speaks and introduces an entirely new dimension of human understanding of evil, pain, and suffering.
- d. God's Dialogue – 38:1-40:5
 - i. It is interesting that one of the oldest books of the Bible is Job... it is an ancient poem about wrestling with why a Good and all-powerful God allows bad things happen to good people. This is the theological problem of Theodicy (Theo=God, and dike'=justice). According to The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, "Theodicy refers to attempts to [understand and] justify the ways of God to humanity. A successful theodicy resolves the problem of evil and demonstrates that God is all-powerful, all-loving, and just... despite the existence of evil." Zondervan's Archaeological Study Bible compares the speeches of God found in Job chapter 38-41 to the mythic stories of ancient Hittite Polytheism to demonstrate the unmatched greatness of the monotheistic YAHWEH:
 - 1. The speeches of God in Job 38-41 present God [YAWEH] as absolute and unrivaled in His power over nature. The stars, storms, seasons, and wild animals all submit to and depend upon Him. God even controls *Leviathan*, the dragon that symbolizes chaos and evil. In polytheism, on the other hand, gods are often depicted as weak and dependent.
 - 2. Hittite texts of myth and ritual illustrate this. For example, the Telepinu myth recounts an incident in which the storm god Telepinu was reported to have become angry and deserted his post [in moderating the weather]. In his absence the crops ceased to grow and the livestock [failed] to calve. Even the other gods began to panic at the prospect of starvation. Although the gods were unable to locate Telepinu, a bee found him asleep under a tree and wakened him with a sting. A goddess of magic and a human priest then performed expiatory rituals that assuaged Telepinu's anger.
 - 3. Other Hittite myths tell of the storm god's conflict with the dragon Illuyanka. Unlike YAHWEH's domination of Leviathan in Job 41 however, the storm god can scarcely handle Illuyanka. In one version the storm god is first defeated by the dragon, but

the tables turn after the goddess Inara enlists the aid of a mortal, Hupashiya, by sleeping with him. She then hosts a feast; after Illuyanka gorges himself on food Hupashiya binds the dragon with ropes so that the storm god can slay him. In another version the storm god loses his heart and eyes to the dragon in their first battle, but the god's son marries Illuyanka's daughter and persuades Illuyanka to return his father's eyes and heart. The storm god resumes the battle, slaying both the dragon and his son.

4. The profound [nature] of the moral and theological debate of Job could not have arisen from such Pagan myths. The gods depicted in these tales, were simply too weak to control events in a meaningful way, they needed the assistance of other gods and even that of humans and animals [to prevail]. There would also be no problem of evil if God were too weak to control the world; such a theological dilemma can only exist in a setting in which God is understood to be omniscient [all-knowing] and omnipotent [all powerful].
5. **Whereas the problem of Theodicy in Pagan Polytheism and Pantheism doesn't really arise because their gods are known as being weak, capricious, and self-serving; Theodicy has a logical place and an equally logical resolution in Christianity where God is known as all-powerful and Good. Humans individually are "free-will" moral and ethical agents and as such are responsible for their choices and actions before God. Were it otherwise, humanity would be relegated to the position of "automatons" meaning completely subservient beings acting out a scripted play they have no choice but complying. This view of God as completely Sovereign with His will so compelling and completely enforced that the "footprints of a caterpillar across a leaf are ordered" creates another problem... it would make God the Author of both Good and evil, which is a theological conundrum. Free will does not force compel human action, thus humanity retains responsibility to choose to obey and serve God out of love. Jesus promised His followers that He would be with them through the troubles we experience, note John 16:33 – "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." Free will also makes sense since humanities ultimate Home is an eternal one, and God reserves the right to make things right there. The Apostle John wrote in Revelation these two verses confirming what lies ahead in Heaven for Christ Followers:**
7:17 – "For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."
21:4 – "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

ii. 38:1-40:5 – God’s 1st Discourse:

1. God’s covenant name of YHWH indicates that God is reminding Job of their covenant together. It’s a reminder that God is faithful.
2. 38:1 – God speaks from the storm [whirlwind] – God is speaking from the center of the chaos that Job is fearful of. God speaking from this place of fear demonstrates to Job that God is with Job in the midst of his trials. This notion challenges the concept of Job and his generation of presumptive blessing for covenant obedience.
3. 38:2-3 – God chastises Job for his presumptive conclusions.
4. 38:4-38 – The text also shows that God doesn’t explain the suffering to Job, and instead launches into existential questions about creation. God also bypasses the accusations Job’s friends provided. The net result is that God provides boundaries for a complex universe to operate within, and that creation is responsible to its Creator. The playing out of God’s Sovereign will is within restraints on the chaotic energy that threatens humanity and creation itself. The covenant God provided should be enough. All things are not necessarily comprehensible by humanity. We are a part of the created order and must find our place in it rather than decree how it should function.
 - a. The “Light in the sky” exposes the wicked on earth – 38:12-15.
 - b. Light finally reigns over darkness.
 - c. No living mortal has seen what lies beyond the grave – 38:16-18.
 - d. The storm that so troubled Job is not arbitrary, and mortals may only observe but cannot understand God’s purposes – 38:22-30.
 - e. The same applies to wild animal life which doesn’t need to fit into the patterns we deem “good” – 38:39-39:30.
 - f. The result of all this is that all of these natural paradoxes can only be resolved in God – 39:19-30.
5. 40:1-3 – In conclusion, a mortal cannot instruct God and it is folly to seek an arbitrator to whom God must answer.
6. 40:4-5 – Job remains in humbled silence until God is finished, and then he confesses his unworthiness. The result is a new understanding and dependent relationship with God.

iii. 40:6-42:6 – God’s 2nd Discourse:

1. 40:6-7 God repeats this earlier chastisement of Job of 38:2-3.
2. 40:9-14 – humanity doesn’t have the power or authority and thus cannot restrain evil or wickedness. Job’s accusation of God’s injustice challenges God’s Sovereign right to enforce justice in His own way. Just because we don’t understand doesn’t mean that God doesn’t have a plan. God sees the bigger picture and has the power to enforce His will. Humanity doesn’t have the unlimited power or

authority of imposing a utopian rule over creation... being part of sin-cursed earth our best efforts will always be flawed.

3. 41:1-33 – the fantastic monsters Behemoth and Leviathan represent the proud wicked leaders who impose their will on a vulnerable majority. Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot and so many others are examples of rulers who rule through intimidation and destruction. Because our sense of justice is flawed, we cannot impose perfect justice... only God can accomplish this. The promise of Jesus' millennial reign is the promise of Messiah's ability to create a Garden on sin-cursed earth, where Satan caused destruction and desolation.

[see Biblical Literacy/Bible Survey/Apocalypse/Eschatology]

4. In Summation – in Job God does not solve the problem of Theodicy [the question of God's justice in light of human suffering]. Instead God reveals that evil and disorder and their resultant sufferings on humanity have a restricted place within the fabric of creation. It is understood that this is beyond human understanding or control. Humanity must come to terms with the partly determinant/partly indeterminate character of the world without denying God's goodness and justice.

iv. 42:1-6 – Job's Confession:

1. Job confesses his own ignorance about God's ultimate plan and of God's Sovereign right to do with His creation what He knows to be best. Ultimately the question of understanding can only be resolved by trust.
2. Before this experience, Job knew about God's omnipotence, but failed to realize the entirety of God's plan. Evil is restrained but not eliminated. Boundaries for evil have been set on Fallen earth, but evil won't be eliminated until Messiah ushers in the New Age.
3. Job's take away – humanity may serve God through suffering being confident that while evil may be allowed to occur, it ultimately is restrained and subservient to God's Goodness.

e. Epilogue – 42:7-17

- i. Without this victorious epilogue, Job would be a tragedy leaving the struggle of good & evil, light & darkness, humility & pride, submission & rebellion fighting an eternal war within God's design. Evil exists, however:
 1. Belief in the goodness of God and the order He established within creation, and the boundaries God established to limit evil gives humanity hope.
 2. The availability of reconciliation with God because of God's desire to redeem humanity vindicates Job's faith.
 3. God is not ambivalent or detached from His creation, and certainly not from the people He loves.
 4. The "cup" Job drank was prophetic of Jesus in Gethsemane. The cup of pain and

suffering was converted to a cup of victory and celebration at Pentecost. The fact that Messiah Jesus endured such extreme suffering for the Joy promised – note **Luke 6:20-23** – And turning His gaze toward His disciples, [Jesus] *began* to say, “Blessed *are* you *who are* poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed *are* you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed *are* you who weep now, for you shall laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. Be glad in that day and leap *for joy*, for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets.” **Redemptive Truth is revealed in the face of pain, suffering and evil... or more properly, how we stand before it.**

5. **Paul writes in Romans a fitting conclusion to Job in Romans 8:29-38** – “For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

ii. **Two things ensue as a result of Job’s redemption and reconciliation with God:**

1. **42:7-9 – the Spiritual restoration of Job’s friends – there are both worthy and unworthy covenant partners who receive Truth from God.**
 - a. **The basic conflict between Job and his friends had to do with Job’s moral and ethical nature. Job is morally vindicated and relationally restored by God. Job’s friends now needed to be relationally restored to Job and to God.**
 - b. **Job mediates for his abusive friends serving as their High Priest and restoring their relationships. They humbled themselves by acknowledging their wrong doing against Job and God.**
 - c. **God doesn’t coerce remorse and repentance, but they are foundational for**

restoration and reconciliation.

- d. This fulfills the statement Eliphaz made that if Job would reconcile himself to God, he would become an intercessor who could deliver the non-innocent from divine wrath – 22:26-30.

2. 42:10-17 – the Material restoration of Job

- a. Job's restoration is conditioned upon his free acceptance of God's desired intercession for his friends. Job restoration is double what he had before and includes his restoration within the community.
- b. Grace shared within the community is to be given to promote community health and restoration, amid the "forgiveness cycle" of conviction, remorse, repentance, restoration, and reconciliation.
- c. Recovery is often in conflict with redemption:
 - i. Recovery is improvement through human action and is usually at the expense of another. Recovery comes out of direct human effort and action.
 - ii. Redemption is Spiritual healing that comes through surrender to God. Redemption comes from trusting God for the resolution we cannot enact ourselves.
- d. Growth of Wisdom – there is "knowing of" "knowing about" and "knowing experientially" – these are three levels of experiencing knowledge and wisdom. The last is best understood in relational dependence in the face of fear.
- e. Redemption is being saved out of the life as we've known it and moved into a higher level of trust and knowing. It is usually born through desperation when our attempts at restoring the reality we once knew is transformed and renewed through the Grace of God.

7. THEODICY – THE PROBLEM OF PAIN AND SUFFERING AND AN ALL POWERFUL-BENEVELENT GOD AS IT LANDS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT – THE GOSPEL OF JOHN CHAPTER 11:

- a. **INTRODUCTION – BACKGROUND:** In all of the stories from John's Gospel, there is always an obvious and a more subtle interpretation available. The account of Lazarus is one of the most powerful passages in Scripture... it grabs your attention and you can almost feel the shock and awe of the incredulous observers as they witness this great event. This passage begs the question, "Why would it be important for John's readers to hear this story... or put a better way, why would the Spirit want this story revealed in this way?" We need to do some hermeneutical reconnaissance to better understand what was going on in the Christian community at the time before we can understand what the Spirit was saying to them near the end of the 1st century AD, and then to extrapolate what it means to us today.

- i. **Expositor's Commentary says** – The account of the raising of Lazarus is the climactic sign in the Gospel of John. Each of Jesus' seven signs illustrates some particular aspect of his divine authority. They are called "signs" because they point to something beyond the event themselves. In most cases, these signs were followed by a confession of belief on the part of many of the spectators. This particular sign [of Lazarus] exemplifies Jesus' power over the last and most irresistible enemy of humanity – death. For this reason, it is given a prominent place in John's Gospel. It is also significant because it precipitated the decision of Jesus' enemies to finally decide to do away with Him. Something changed here and [as a result the Jewish leaders] conclude they must act. Furthermore, this episode contains a strong personal command to believe in Jesus in a crisis, when such belief would be most difficult. All that preceded this story in John's Gospel is preparatory [for this event]; all that follows it is the unfolding of a well-marked plot... revealing Jesus as the Author of Life and the Master over death.
 - ii. **Historically, the events of which John is writing, actually took place in the early 30's AD. Later in AD 64 Emperor Nero burned much of Rome and blamed the Christians of arson. This launched the terrible persecution of Messianic Jews and Christians until AD 68. Many martyrs were killed during this time including Peter and Paul in Rome. By AD 70 the Temple in Jerusalem was completely destroyed as Jesus had predicted... not one stone left standing. When Emperor Domitian came to power in AD 86, he soon after claimed the title of "Lord and God" and demanded everyone address him accordingly under penalty of death for their refusal. Christians flatly refused to so acknowledge him for they had One Lord and God being Jesus. Domitian then launched another persecution of Christians including the region of the seven Churches listed in chapters 2 and 3 of the book of Revelation. It was at this time that the Apostle John was exiled to the Island of Patmos where he wrote Revelation.**
 - iii. **Into this context the Gospel of John was written in the early to mid-80's followed by Revelation written in the early to mid-90's. With so much turmoil going on in the Christian community, it is understandable why the Spirit through John would want to provide such a powerful message of consolation. It is generally accepted that the Spirit sought to console Christian's to stand firm in their faith in the face of any adversity and hold fast even to the point of death knowing that since Jesus was the Master of Life, death had lost its sting (1 Corinthians 15:55).**
- b. OVERVIEW – TWO OBVIOUS THOUGHTS:**
- i. **First obvious thought – Jesus gets the word that Lazarus is ill, but He stays away and knowingly lets him die. At face value this seems unusual and even cruel, but the story is soon transformed into an amazing act of power, love, and kindness.**
 - 1. **When Jesus finally goes to see Lazarus, he is not only dead but rotting in his grave. Jesus gives an object lesson to Martha that is the main point of faith in Christ in**

this passage (John 11:25-27) – Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” “Yes, Lord,” she told him, “I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.” This confession is key and is the point of the drama that follows.

2. Now put yourself in this situation... Lazarus’ body is not merely dead, but he’s been buried for four days – meaning his body is decaying, and everyone knows it. There’s a bunch of people observing this event, people from all over including some leaders of the Jews. With the tension high, Jesus calls Lazarus to come out, and the dead man obeys Jesus... being made whole and healthy again. It’s important to note that Lazarus is raised but not resurrected... resurrection refers to the new physical body we will receive at the end of the age in the new perfected world. This raising is a completely restored Fallen physical body... but the observers had to have been absolutely blown away! No laying on of hands, just a firm vocal command, and even the dead must respond to Jesus.
 3. Conclusion... if you were there in the crowd and had observed this, you would have to profess that Jesus is the Messiah because only God could do such a powerful miracle. After this sign, there is no way that death would be an impediment preventing one’s obedience and devotion to Jesus. Paul puts it this way in Philippians 1:21 –For me to live is Christ [meaning His Life being lived out in me], and to die is gain [meaning I gain all the glory of eternity with Jesus].
- ii. Second obvious thought – the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem hear of this amazing thing that Jesus has done, but instead of believing in Him John writes of them debating what to do about their “Jesus problem”... which is simply stated in John 11:46-48 – Some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. “What are we accomplishing?” they asked. “Here is this man performing many miraculous signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.”
1. Notice the identity distinction... to the friends of Mary and Martha Jesus is the Messiah; but to the Jewish leaders He is “*this man*.” They acknowledge what Jesus is doing as miraculous; they acknowledge that only God could enable such miraculous works; but they refuse to believe He is the Messiah, because then they would have to submit to Him as Lord.
 2. Notice their stated concern... firstly “*our place*” meaning their preferred role of privilege; secondly “*our nation*” meaning their right to rule in God’s name. Because they are locked into a self-serving and status-quo preserving mind set, they refuse to accept Jesus as Messiah in spite of all the proof they witnessed.

Their false faith is now openly revealed... they are wicked men and not the Godly Spiritual leaders they ought to be. The Prophet Ezekiel adequately described such false leaders some 800 years before this event in Ezekiel chapter 34.

3. Conclusion... Jesus is all the things God wants in a Servant Leader, and the Jewish leaders are not. That is why Jesus is the “Good Shepherd” and the false leaders are merely thieves (John 10:7-15). The miracles Jesus performed proved that He is doing the Work of His Father... ergo Jesus is the Messiah. The false leaders are now found plotting to destroy God’s Messiah because they find His message not to their liking. This reveals that they cared little for God, and even less for God’s people. Essentially, they are in this for themselves here and now. This is also an important reminder as to what our priorities should be as modern-day disciples and leaders of God’s people in the Church.

c. MESSAGE OF THEODICY:

- i. It involves the shortest verse in Scripture... John 11:35 – “*Jesus wept.*” The immediately preceding text states, “When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.” This is similar language to what Jesus said to His disciples at the Last Supper and also in the Garden of Gethsemane prior to His crucifixion. This is not a mere tear or two, this is a gut-wrenching emotional connection. The language is similar to what Jesus said to His disciples before His crucifixion.
- ii. This response from Jesus begs the question, “Why?” Why would Jesus be so distraught? Jesus knew what He intended to do... He knows that Lazarus will be raised, the text says He knew what was happening and what He would do when He first got the word that Lazarus was sick. Why then this strong emotional response?
- iii. The first part of the answer is a reminder that Jesus is “Emmanuel” ... meaning “God with us” both as man and God. Jesus understands the fragile and tentative nature of humanity, being fully God and fully human. Jesus completely understands our hopes and our fears, and He is moved by sorrow and loss. This emotional connection demonstrates Jesus’ humanity, and His connection to all who suffer.
- iv. The second part of the answer has to do with Jesus lament for the leaders of the Jews who should have recognized Him as their Messiah, but also submit to Him as their Lord and Master. The Jewish leadership is now openly prepared to solve their “*Jesus Problem*” by getting rid of Him by killing Him to protect their own personal interests; and notice they won’t take the action themselves; they push it off onto the Romans.
- v. The third part of the answer is a very complicated theological matter known as “Theodicy.” Simply stated, Theodicy deals with the theological problem of how an All-Powerful, All-Good and All-Loving God could allow the pain and suffering of humanity. If God is all powerful, good, and loving – then it would seem obvious that He can certainly

eradicate all pain and suffering... so why does He tolerate it? This raises some troubling questions – 1) maybe God isn't who we think He is, and 2) maybe He just really doesn't care about me.

1. This problem is exactly what the Book of Job deals squarely about. Job's conclusion is that we don't see the entire picture... we don't know how personal freedom and the opportunity for evil work through the Spiritual Realm. Ultimately, Job repents of his doubt and shortsightedness, and reaffirms his trust and obedience of God.
 2. Many of King David's Psalms contain a "complaint" as to why God allows evil men to prosper while many of the righteous suffer loss. However, it is important to note that David never doubts God's goodness or His power. David always affirms that God's Goodness will ultimately be demonstrated, and that good will be rewarded and evil will be destroyed in the end.
 3. In writing this chapter, John is answering the question many Christians would have been asking at the time... "Does God really care about Me? Does He care about what I feel?" And the answer provided in this story is a resounding yes! God understands... in fact He is crying with us!
- vi. Theologically, the problem of resolving God's tolerance of pain and suffering and God's Goodness and Love – is based upon the concept of humanity's free will and the working out of the three aspects of God's Will:
1. First is God's Sovereign Will – these are the specific things that God decrees must occur. These are things that are necessary for the playing out of God's purpose in redemptive history. God in His Sovereign Will sees that certain things occur to advance His redemptive plan for humanity. God's Sovereignty plays out in redemptive history in perfect balance with all the Scripture revealed attributes of God... expressed perfectly all the time.
 2. Second is God's Prescriptive Will – these are the things that God prefers or desires to occur, but that He doesn't necessarily compel or force them to happen. Redemptive history plays out within a moral and ethical relational framework where humanity may deliberately partner with God to advance His Kingdom... or refuse. These are the things that expose our inner-being through our priorities and our intentions.
 3. Third is God's Permissive will – these are the things that God allows humanity to decide for themselves within the ongoing evolving of God's Sovereign and Prescriptive Will. These are the myriad choices we make each day in which our character plays out in our ordinary life in real time. These decisions are how salt and light are demonstrated in our nature.
 4. Humanity's Free Will – plays out in the context of these three aspects of God's

Will. In this interaction God works all things for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).

- a. Our God given conscience provides a moral and ethical compass by which we can choose to do what is right and good. As we deliberately seek to please God and advance His Kingdom, these choices become increasingly obvious with the Spirit's internal guidance.
 - b. However, we are free to refuse. When we persist in wrong choices our moral and ethical compass becomes less certain and may become bent and even broken. We have the choice to restrain evil in performing Godly action, or to focus on that which we desire without concern for what is right and honoring to God.
 - c. Without this freedom of choice, there is no free will for humanity... and without the right to choose it is hard to argue we are the responsible agents for our actions. If we deny free will, then it can be argued that humanity cannot be held culpable for our actions. The extreme development of this concept would hold that God then becomes the author of evil, which is an untenable conclusion, and one that Job and King David and a myriad of Biblical characters unilaterally refused confirming God's Goodness and His Sovereignty.
- vii. Theodicy plays out in the context of humanities rebellion revealed in Genesis chapter 3, and in living out our lives as Fallen men and women on Fallen and cursed earth. As God's redemptive plan plays out:
1. Messiah's First coming and His death and Resurrection solved the problem of the sin-curse which separated humanity and God. This resolved the sin barrier to our personal relationship with God which is now removed.
 2. Messiah's Second coming at the end of the Church age God will solve the problem of the sin-curse on earth. When Jesus comes back, He will make a New Heaven and earth where goodness, peace and joy are experienced all the time.
 3. From God's perspective, the problem with humanity being without free will is that we become nothing more than an "animaton" ... a puppet-like creature that has no choice but to follow a carefully scripted and prescribed course of action. Such a creature is incapable of freely giving and receiving love. Scripture teaches that God desires us to become His friends... and to voluntarily submit and obey Him out of love and personal devotion to Him. He desires that we choose to do what is right and resist what is wrong, expecting that the consequences of our motives and actions will be worked out... not necessarily now, but certainly in eternity.
 4. God's redemptive plan necessarily means humanity must choose, and choice means free will, and free will means we are free to choose to do what is good or

what is evil. And evil choices mean collateral damage, both in our own bodies and in the life of others will occur. Heavenly judgment involves settling the account for free will in the Presence of God. For those who are in Christ and sealed by the Spirit, we pass out of judgment into freedom; for those who refuse God's offering or redemption in Christ and submittal to His will and Spirit, judgment will bring condemnation and loss.

5. The problem with our notion of Theodicy is the misunderstanding that in God's economy individuality and personal choices are critically important... so important that God allows human caused evil rather than force all action to be good. In other words, the freedom to do right or wrong is a greater good than the compulsion of strict conformity to God's will.
- d. **FINAL THOUGHTS** – The message of Jesus weeping as written by John, involves God's entering into the pain and suffering of those who were experiencing personal pain and loss... which would later be turned to joy and celebration. Just as Lazarus' mourners sorrow turned to joy and amazement, and just as Jesus followers' sorrow at His crucifixion was turned to joy at Jesus resurrection, so will all those who do what is right through the ages find joy and amazement in eternity. This message was a great comfort for John's contemporaries and is also a great comfort for us now. It is a reminder that we are never alone, and that God feels our pain and suffering. It is also a picture of what will happen at the end of the age when Jesus returns and takes us into our perfect eternal home... where all pain and suffering will be swallowed up in joy.

THEODICY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- a. READ 1 Corinthians 15:49-58 – How should this reframe our thought in an age of identity confusion where people are more concerned with “what they have” than “who they are?”
- b. READ James 1:2-4 – what does it mean for Jesus so real to you that you can consider trials as joy knowing they are perfecting our faith?
- c. READ Romans 8:31-39 presented here in the Living Bible Translation –
“What can we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? Since God did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't God, who gave us Christ, also give us everything else? Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? Will God? No! He is the one who has given us right standing with himself. Who then will condemn us? Will Christ Jesus? No, for he is the one who died for us and was raised to life for us and is sitting at the place of highest honor next to God, pleading for us. Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean He no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or are hungry or cold or in danger or threatened with death? Even the Scriptures say, “For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.” No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from his love.

Death can't, and life can't. The angels can't, and the demons can't. Our fears for today, our worries about tomorrow, and even the powers of hell can't keep God's love away. Whether we are high above the sky or in the deepest ocean, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

This is the logical conclusion for the problem of Theodicy... and the hope that transforms suffering into joy. What pain are you carrying that you need to be transformed? What fears do you have that prevent you from being more committed as a disciple of Jesus?

Share and pray over these in faith believing and ask for the increase of faith and wisdom which God desires to provide. And decide to get involved in a Journey Group where the ongoing fellowship will encourage you to grow deeper in your Journey with Christ.

- Outline of John as the Book of Signs – 1:19-12:50 – this documents most of Jesus public ministry.

There are 7 signs that occur in John's Gospel:

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| i. 2:1-11 | water changed to wine. |
| ii. 4:46-54 | healing of centurion's son |
| iii. 5:1-17 | healing at the Bethesda pool |
| iv. 6:1-14 | feeding of the 5,000 |
| v. 6:15-25 | walking on the water |
| vi. 9:1-12 | healing a man born blind |
| vii. 11:1-46 | raising of Lazarus |
- Transition – 12:20 – Greeks [non-Jews] are seeking Jesus – now Jesus' time has come.
 - Book of Glory – 13:1-17:26 – mostly documents Jesus' private ministry to His disciples.
 - Book of the Passion – 18:1-20:31
 - Epilogue – 21:1-25