



# PT Butler

## Bible Study Notebooks

### Study of The Book of Job

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# JOB

## Introduction

(It is essential that all Sunday School Teachers study this “Introductory” material closely)

The book of Job is classified by modern scholars as part of the “Wisdom Literature” of the Bible. Prior to A.D. 200 the book of Job was classified among the “historical books” (e.g., that is where Josephus, the Septuagint and Augustine placed it). After A.D. 200 it seems to have placed by the Jews among the books known as “Writings” or “Kethubhim (called by Jerome in 405 A.D. the Hagiographia or “Holy Writings.” James Smith, in his book, *Wisdom Literature & Psalms*, 1996, College Press, notes that in the mainly rural and nomadic society of the ancient Middle-East (i.e., Canaan, Trans-Jordan country and Mesopotamia) life centered around four classes of leaders:” princes, priests, prophets, and pontificators or wise men.” Wise men or sages or pontificators were very prominent in Edom (Jer. 49:7; Obadiah 8); in Phoenicia (Ezek. 28; Zech. 9:2), Babylon (Isa. 44:25; 47:10; the entire book of Daniel); Assyria Isa. 10:13); Egypt (Isa. 19:11-13), and Persia (Esther 1:13). At the time Israel’s wisdom books were written, wisdom literature in neighboring cultures had been on scene for at least a 1000 years. These “wise men” would have included descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Ishmael (Jewish and Arab). A careful study of the speeches of Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar and Elihu will find that much of what these “nomad-princes or wise-men” friends of Job uttered may be found not only in the other OT “Wisdom” books, but also in the Koran of Islam! While Islam was not founded until some 2000 years after Job, the Koran clues us in to the kind of “wisdom” or world-view of the sages in the Arab tribes, beginning with Ishmael to Muhammed! Muhammed, the founded Islam about 630 A.D. One should not be surprised to find Middle Eastern parallels to the Book of Job for two reasons. First, this is wisdom literature, and “wisdom” always has an international flavor (i.e., all human philosophies try claim “wisdom”). Second, the issue of the relationship of personal suffering and piety is one that challenges all philosophies (Humanism, Determinism, Idealism, Pragmatism, Existentialism, Realism, Evolutionism, etc.) and religious systems (Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, etal).

The book of Job itself names no author and claims no definite date for its composition. It is therefore an anonymous work. Any assertion about the authorship or date of writing must be considered “guess-timation” from its contents. The Jewish Talmud and early Christian writers assert that the book was written by Moses. The time, nature, and theme of the book fit with this “tradition.” Moses may have compiled the book of Job from the records of the conversations made by Elihu. Elihu may be indicating (Job 33:2-6) that he preserved his, and the other, conversations with Job. Elihu was the son of Barachel, a Buzite (i.e., an Aramean) (Job 32:2-6; 34:1; 35:1; 36:1). Aram is a broad term designating the lands of the Fertile Crescent from Mesopotamia to Phoenicia. Its people came out of the same Arabian reservoir of Semitic peoples as the Hebrews, and were closely related to Israel, with whom their history was intertwined, sometimes in alliance, often in conflict. It is synonymous with Syria (Num. 23:7; 2 Sam. 8:5; 1 Kings 20:20; Amos 1:5). Mosaic authorship would explain (a) how this foreign book came to be possessed by the Hebrews; (b) how it

attained a canonical status; (c) its patriarchal flavor and setting; and (d) the Aramaic flavor in some of the terminology of the book. The date of the writing (ca. 1450 B.C.) of Job and the date of the events (ca. 2000-1500 B.C.) described in the book are not to be considered the same dates! There are some conservative scholars who think Solomon composed the book from ancient writings or word-of-mouth-recitations of the patriarchs.

The events of the book seem to have taken place in sometime in the 500 year period between 2000 B.C. and 1500 B.C.—before Moses received the law. Several marks of antiquity appear in the prose sections of the book, i.e., (a) Job lived in a tent, not a house (18:6); (b) Job performed his own sacrifice without priesthood or shrine (1:5); (c) Job’s wealth is measured in flocks, herds and servants (1:3); (d) his land was subject to invasion by roving tribes (1:15-17); (e) Job’s life span of 140 years is in harmony with the long lives of the patriarchs of Genesis 42:15); (f) the names used in the book are authentic names of the patriarchal era 2000-1500 B.C.; (g) the total silence of the speakers on the miracles attending the Exodus; (h) and Eliphaz was a descendant of Esau’s elders son called Diphay, who had a son called Teman (gen. 36:10-22). Smith says the comparative infrequent use of the name Jehovah (13 times) —“Jehovah” is the preferred name for God after the law was given to Moses—and preference for the name Shaddai, i.e., Almighty (at least 31 times), tends to confirm the non-Israelite background of the book (i.e., before the Mosaic covenant). Remember, even Abraham was a “Gentile” in his early years of following the Almighty God (Rom. 4:9-11)—Abraham was 99 years old before he was circumcised (Gen. 17:1ff).

Job was a native of the land of Uz (1:1). The human name Uz is attached to one of Nahor’s sons by Milcah (Gen. 22:21). He is called “Huz” in the KJV. The human name Uz is also given to one of the sons of Aram (Gen. 10:23), the grandson of Shem. Uz is referred to twice by Jeremiah (Jer. 25:20; Lam. 4:21). There are quite a few details given in the Scripture by which this land can be identified. Eliphaz, one of Job’s friends, came from Teman located in ancient Edom—east of the northern end of the Dead Sea. Uz was also located near “Tema” (Job 6:18-20) and one of the 12 sons of Ishmael was named “Tema” (Gen. 25:12-16). “Tema” was about 300 miles s.e. of Teman in the Arabian peninsula, 100 miles east of the Red Sea. Uz was exposed to attacks by the Chaldeans and Sabeans (Job. 1:15-17). Then it must have been located near a city gate at which Job sat. It must also have been good pasture land, for Job had extensive herds of cattle (Job 1:3; 42:12). **UZ WAS APPARENTLY SOMEWHERE IN THE GENERAL AREA WE KNOW TODAY AS NORTHERN ARABIA**, where there would be cities and good pasture land—Job was a nomadic “prince” of the hill country east of the land of Palestine.

The book of Job explicitly claims divine revelation in the presentation of the heavenly council scene in chapters 1-2 and in the citation of the actual words of God in chs. 38-41. James, the apostle, certifies that Job, the man, was an actual, historical person (James 5:11) as does Ezekiel (Ezek. 14:14,20). So, although we have God disclaiming words of Job and his friends as being sanctioned by God, they are at the same time to be accepted as “divinely accurate.” That same concept may be made for many utterances of human beings recorded in the Bible—not “inspired” from God, but recorded under the direction of the Holy Spirit and thus accurate. A key witness to the canonicity of the book of Job is Josephus (A.D. 90). The presence of the book of Job in

the collection of the Old Testament books has not been questioned either by the Jews (i.e., the Council of Jamnia, A.D. 90) or by the early Christian church. Citations in ancient Jewish sources make it clear that the book of Job was part of the Scriptures recognized as divinely revealed by Jesus and the early Church. This is reason enough to view the canonicity of the book as settled forever.

What is the purpose of the book of Job? What lessons may a Christian get from studying the book? The book of Job deals with one of the oldest problems known to the human race—"Why do the righteous suffer?" The unfolding of the story shows that from the divine standpoint Job's sufferings and ours are a testing; from the human standpoint it shows that suffering is a trial, inexplicable from human wisdom and difficult to bear; from Satan's standpoint suffering is a temptation or an attempted trap. Though the devil, Job's wife, and his "friends" added fuel to the flames of Job's excruciating suffering, Job by crying, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him," very effectively disproved the age-long lie that says "Every man has his price." The book proves conclusively, moreover, that all suffering is not due to personal sin. Whereas Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar came to sympathize and remained to criticize Job as personally perverse, Elihu speaks of the educational value of suffering and prepares the way for God to speak. Incidentally, the book of Job reveals how astonishingly full the theological knowledge and intellectual culture of the patriarchal age was (including the descendants of Ishmael). Almost every important doctrine is found therein, in addition to scientific truths only fully "discovered" in these times. Job's example has blessed the sorrowing of the ages, but the real Man of Sorrows is not Job but Jesus. He, as the Living Redeemer, demonstrates that if a man die he shall live again. He becomes "the Daysman" (Advocate) between God and man; for His humanity touches us while His deity touches God, thus providing "at-one-ment."

This is how James Smith sees the purpose of the book of Job: "In essence, Job challenged the sovereignty of God. Before his ordeal Job viewed God as mandated to always act in certain ordered and predictable ways. Job agreed with his friends that God was responsible for his sufferings. They argue from their orderly worldview that Job must have sinned else he would not be punished with suffering. Job argues from his personal experience of righteousness that his suffering cannot be punishment for sin for he has committed no sin worthy of such punishment. Nor will he accept that he is being tested. What he has experienced is torture, not testing. Therefore Job demands an explanation from God, although he realizes the hopelessness of any prospect of divine redress. For Job, it is not so much suffering which has become problematic, it is God himself. The challenge is: Can Job trust a God who is totally sovereign and whose activities cannot be circumscribed by the dictates of philosophy or theology? God's response to Job accuses him only of one thing. He, a mere mortal, has interfered in God's affairs. God does not dismiss Job; he instructs him. The speeches of God at the conclusion of the book serve the purpose of bringing center stage both the majesty and mystery of the universe. All creation bears witness to God. Job's dilemma is resolved when he withdraws his challenge and acknowledges that he too is under the protection of the mysterious God who governs all creation. To be more specific, the Book of Job reveals who God is. It shows the kind of trust which God wants his children to have regarding him. Here is revealed God's favor toward his children and his absolute control over Satan."

The doctrine of Satan as far as the Old Testament goes is never clearer than in the book of Job. Satan had access to the presence of Jehovah, yet he was governed by his sovereignty. Satan fosters ill-will toward both God and man, who is made in God's image. His aim in this book is not so much to tempt Job to commit various sins, but to force him to the ultimate sin, the denial of God. Yet Satan is on a leash. Even in Job's day Satan was "bound." He can do no more than he is permitted by his creator to do. In the end Satan is proved wrong about men and their relationship to God. He loses this skirmish. Believers can therefore take courage. Though Satan does his worst, Job proves that man can indeed remain faithful to the Lord. The New Testament teaches emphatically that Satan's ultimate powers have been conquered through the Perfect Man, Jesus Christ, and Satan's temporary powers in this earthly existence have been severely limited by the power of the Gospel which has gone into all the world (see my essay, "Is There Demon Possession Today As There Was During the Time of Christ's Incarnate Ministry?" in my commentary on The Gospel of Luke, pp. 153-156, College Press 1981, and my essay "Questions About Whether the Devil Can Actually Perform Supernatural Deeds Or Not," in my commentary, Twenty-Six Lessons on Revelation, Part 2, pp. 241-245, College Press, 1982).

Clearly the NT teaches that: (a) when Christ came, he "bound" Satan to some extent (Matt. 12:28-30); (b) Christ's redemptive work "destroyed" the power of the fear of death (Heb. 2:14-18) which the devil used until Jesus' resurrection to subject the world to bondage; (c) the Son of God appeared to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8); (d) and when ancient Rome fell the devil was defeated and cast out of heaven and down to earth (Rev. 12:7-12) and he was "bound" for "1000 years" (Rev. 20:1-3). One has only to compare the "power" of the devil to distort the meaning of suffering in the case of Job with the revelation from God through the apostles on suffering in the NT. In the New Testament we see that Satan's "power" to overcome with temptation and testing is now severely limited for those who believe in God!

The book of Job is primarily poetic in style and content. This must be constantly kept in mind as we study the book lest we try to make too much out of the imagery and repetition of ideas. About 1/3 of the OT is written in poetic form—the psalms are the prime example of Hebrew poetry. Some of the prophets (e.g., Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations) used the poetic form for varying portions of their prophetic books. Hebrew poetry is not primarily a poetry of rhyme and meter, although there is a certain rhythmic quality about it. The primary characteristic of Hebrew poetry is parallelism. There are three basic types of parallelism (a) synonymous; (b) antithetic; (c) synthetic. In "synonymous" parallelism an initial line finds verbal parallels in the succeeding line (e.g. Psa. 19:1). In "antithetic" parallelism the second line of a couplet expresses the opposite of the first (e.g. Psa. 1:6). In "synthetic" parallelism we have all the rest of Hebrew poetry where the second and succeeding line expands or amplifies the first line (e.g. Psa. 2:6)—"synthetic" parallelism sometimes indicates a comparison (e.g., Prov. 15:17). Sometimes "synthetic" parallelism extends to more than two lines (Psa. 1:1). Remember, also, that as in all poetic expression there is wide use of imagery.

Why is there suffering? I will give you a brief outline excerpted from the wonderful book, *What The Bible Says About Suffering*, by Willie White, College Press, 1984. I recommend here also, *The Problem of Pain*, by C. S. Lewis Macmillian, 1962;

Have Atheists Proved There Is No God? by Thomas B. Warren, Gospel Advocate, 1962; and The Human Journey, by Bruce Wilson, Ronald N. Haynes, pub., 1981.

The One Who gave us being has a purpose in suffering—not that he causes suffering, but that he uses it to our good and his glory.

Suffering May Glorify God (1 Pet. 4:15-16; John 11:4,45)

Suffering May Make Us Christlike (Rom. 8:29; Phil. 3:10; 1 Pet. 2:21)

Suffering May Increase Our Faith (1 Pet. 5:10; 2 Cor. 1:8-11; 12:7-10)

Suffering May Purify Our Lives (Psa. 119:67,71; 1 Pet. 4:1)

Suffering May Keep Us Humble (Acts 9:15-16; 2 Cor. 2:8-11; 12:7-11)

Suffering May Teach Us Patience (Endurance) (James 1:3-4; 1 Pet. 2:23; Luke 2:19)

Suffering May Teach Us Gratitude (2 Cor. 11:30)

Suffering May Lead Us To the Place of Prayer (Heb. 5:8-9)

Suffering May Make Us Sympathetic and Helpful (2 Cor. 1:3-7)

Suffering May Prepare Us For Our Eternal Home (Rom. 8:17; 2 Cor. 4:17; Rev. 7:14)

I heartily recommend that you read especially, *The Problem of Pain*, by C. S. Lewis, and *What The Bible Says About Suffering*, by Willie White. The other absolutely excellent little book of only 95 pages, *Have Atheists Proved There Is No God?*, is probably out of print—but if you could get a copy somewhere, it would go a LONG WAY to answer anyone’s question, “If there is a good God, why does he permit evil and suffering to occur.”

But let’s get on with the questions on each of the lesson sheets.

## JOB 1:1—3:26

It is the author of the book who first characterizes Job. Later, his four friends will “characterize” him and he will reply with his own characterization of himself. But the author of the book, guided inerrantly by the Holy Spirit, says four things about Job—all good. Job is described as: (a) blameless (Heb. tam, “complete, with integrity, not “wishy-washy”—but not, of course, sinless)—the author represents God himself calling Job blameless and upright (1:8; 2:3); (b) upright (Heb. yashar, not devious, not hypocritical)—Job was morally irreproachable; (c) fearing God—he revered the Creator and humbly submitted to the Creator’s will—the fear of God is the foundation of wisdom; (d) turning aside from evil—he avoided all action that God had designated as sinful—the fear of God gives a person the moral discernment to avoid evil. Job was a good man—filled with good works as he himself will point out later (chapters 29-31) in his rebuttals of the accusations of his “friends.” Job was very prosperous indicating that he was a hard worker and an astute business-man. Measured by the standards of his day, Job was “the greatest of all the men of the east” (1:3). His greatness did not lie in his wealth alone, but in the respect in which he was held and in his influence. Job’s godly character is also indicated by his concern for the spiritual well-being of his grown children. He was faithful in his priestly ministry to his family (1:4-5). **NOW, WHY WOULD GOD ALLOW A MAN LIKE THIS TO BE TESTED BY THE DEVIL BY TAKING ALL THIS AWAY FROM HIM?** How often we’ve thought that about some other “saint” we’ve known—maybe even of ourselves! But, then, why did God allow his PERFECT SON to be tested?

Satan’s primary power is to deceive and tempt. It is clear from Genesis 3:14-15 and from the passages in Job chapters 1 & 2 that God is Almighty and that Satan may do his evil and harm only so far as God allows or permits him to do so! Satan is under the control of Almighty God! Satan’s power to deceive was even broader in Old Testament times because “death had not been abolished and life and immortality” had not yet come to “light” through the Gospel (2 Tim. 1:10) in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. It was Christ’s resurrection that “delivered all those who through fear of death were subject to life long bondage” (Heb. 2:14-18). We need no longer fear the devil—we need to submit ourselves to God and resist the devil and he will flee from us (James 4:7-10). Our fear should be of God who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell (Matt. 10:28). In Job’s case God’s righteousness and authority required a response to the challenge of the devil. Furthermore, Job needed to learn that his theology was warped! Job believed, as most other OT saints, that if a man had a large family with many sons, and was prosperous and respected, and faithfully worshiped God, then nothing “bad” could happen to him. WRONG! God selected one of the most righteous men of all believers at that time in Job to prove to the devil that a “blameless, upright, God-fearing, evil-hating” man would not “sell-out” his faith in God regardless of the trouble he might have to endure! The NT clearly teaches that with the coming of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, the sphere of the devil’s opportunity and capacity to deceive mankind would be limited—the Gospel going into all the world would “shrink” the devil’s powers. Jesus proved Satan was subject to the power of God and Christ and the Gospel by casting out demons, raising the dead, forgiving men their sins on earth—

and by giving this power to a few select spokesmen for the New Covenant (the apostles). SATAN IS “BOUND” TO SOME DEGREE IN NT TIMES THAT HE WAS NOT “BOUND” IN OT TIMES (Matt. 20:25-8; 12:28-30; Luke 10:17-20; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; Rev. 12:7-12; 20:1-3).

Job knew enough about, and believed enough about God to know that everything he had in life, even his own life, was a gift from the Creator-God and that this Almighty Creator could take away any gift he had given. Job knew he could not hold on to any of it and keep it from disappearing or dissolving (see 1 Tim. 6:6-10). ONLY AN ABSOLUTE FOOL DENIES WHAT JOB KNEW (Psa. 14:1). Even “Gentiles who have not the law do by nature what the law requires” (Rom. 2:14). So, Job was able to say, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord” (1:21). Job’s faith in God’s existence, sovereignty and beneficence was strong. Job’s problem was not “what”—it was “why me.” Job says later, “Even though he slay me, yet will I trust him” and “I know that my Redeemer lives.” Job trusted that God really existed and that he was sovereign over all creation, but Job didn’t seem to trust God to be acting as Job thought God should act! Certainly, Job used very strong language about God in his complaints—but complaints were not so much about blaming God for what he had done as God’s silence about why he had done it! DO WE HAVE THE SAME “WIGGLE-ROOM” WITH GOD TODAY? I don’t think so! In view of the fact that God has come down to earth in a human body and was tried, tempted, and suffered, and “shattered the silence” (as James Strauss says in his commentary on Job) about testing, trial, temptation and suffering, we know much more than Job did. We (a) know that “temptations must come” (Matt. 18:7); (b) we know that God, through testing trial and suffering is working on us to “conform us to the image of his Son” (Rom. 8:28-29); (c) we know that suffering produces endurance and endurance produces character (Rom. 5:3-4); (d) we know that affliction is to make us rely not on ourselves but upon God who raises the dead (2 Cor. 1:8-11); (e) we know that affliction is to put us through the “school of hard knocks” in order to comfort others (2 Cor. 1:3-7); (f) we know that chastening is a sign of God’s love for his children (Heb. 12:1-11); (g) and we know that we have need of endurance so we may do the will of God and receive what is promised (Heb. 10:32-39); (h) we know that all who will live godly in this life will suffer persecution (trial, testing, temptation) (John 15:1-18-27; (i) 2 Tim. 3:12); we know that it is possible to live in a fleshly body and steadfastly obey and reach the goal God has for our existence (Heb. 5:8-9); (j) and we know that the sufferings of this present life are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us (Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 4:16-18) —SO WE KNOW SO MUCH MORE THAN JOB KNEW WE SHOULD NOT “GRUMBLE” AND “COMPLAIN” (see 1 Cor. 10:9-10).

The devil hates God and hates human beings made in the image of God—especially does the devil hate those human beings who trust God. Why does the devil have such hatred for God and man? Because the devil wanted to be “in the place of” God—i.e., he wanted to rule heaven and earth so he, along with other angelic beings “did not keep their own position but left their proper dwelling” (Jude 6) in a rebellion and were “cast out” and into the abyss called Tartarus (“the pits of nether gloom”) awaiting their final judgment. In the meantime they “prowl around like a roaring lions” seeking someone they may devour (1 Pet. 5:8). The devil and his angels are able at all times to do only what God permits—note that God accepts responsibility for what is happening

to Job (2:3) when he says to Satan, “He (Job) still holds fast his integrity although you moved me (God) against him.” IT MUST HAVE BEEN WITH GREAT GLEE THAT THE “ADVERSARY” SET ABOUT TO CARRY OUT THE PERMITTED TESTING OF JOB! His first attack is upon Job’s possessions. If Job served God for what he could get out of it, surely the loss of his possessions would be accompanied by the loss of his faith. The most cruel and trying blow of all was reserved for the loss of his loved ones (his sons and daughters)—surely this loss would cause Job to renounce God. “In all of this Job sinned not” (1:22). The devil’s “TRUMP CARD” is Job’s own body—his flesh—so he says to God, “Skin for skin, yea, all that a man has will he give for his life.” (2:4). Whatever Job’s physical condition was it must have been excruciatingly painful and repulsive to behold (see 2:12-13)! Job says so later in his defenses of his integrity (e.g., ch. 7). Satan was sure that if God “touched” (with suffering) the pious patriarch in his bone and flesh Job would curse the Lord to his face. Satan believes every human being “has his price” and will cave in and renounce God if he (Satan) can just find a human being’s “weak spot.” HAVE YOU EVER KNOWN A BELIEVER WHO HAS SUFFERED EXCRUCIATING PAIN FOR A LONG PERIOD OF TIME WHO RENOUNCED THEIR FAITH IN GOD BECAUSE OF THEIR SUFFERING? I never have! The few believers I have known that I think may have suffered as much as Job were only made stronger in their faith. Just as the apostle Paul (2 Cor. 1:8-11; 12:7-10). Think of Abraham, Jacob, David, Jeremiah, Jesus!

Job’s wife broke under the strain of seeing her husband’s suffering. She could not believe her husband would go on trusting God when he, a “good” man, was put through such a “furnace” of suffering. Job’s wife urged him to “curse God and die” and be done with the suffering! James Smith says, “Perhaps her actions here explain why Satan spared her in the first assault (when his children died in the storm). Just as Eve in the garden became Satan’s ally, so now Job’s wife unknowingly is urging her husband to do the Devil’s bidding. Her religion is represented as precisely the kind which Satan ascribed to Job (2:9).” Many famous, as well as not-so-famous, people have taken the suicide route out of suffering—Cleopatra, George Eastman (founder of Eastman Kodak), James Forrestal (former U.S. Secretary of Defense), Sigmund Freud (dying of cancer, made his doctor euthanize him), Arshile Gorky (famous Russian expressionist painter), Marilyn Monroe, George Reeves (who played “Superman” on TV), Mark Rothko (famous expressionist painter), Vincent Van Gogh, Horace Wells (discoverer of anesthesia), Virginia Woolf (novelist and essayist)—perhaps the most famous was Ernest Hemingway (famous author and war correspondent) who suffered all his life from psychological depression also suffered from liver damage, hypertension, hepatitis and high blood pressure, and was somewhat crippled from two airplane crashes and wounds from war. In his final year of life Hemingway wrote, “A long life deprives man of his optimism. (Better) to die in all the happy period of unillusioned youth, to go out in a blaze of light, than to have your body worn out and old and illusions shattered.” In the last week of June 1961 he took his double-barreled shot-gun, put it to his head, and pulled both triggers. Has anyone, outside of Jesus Christ, suffered more than the apostle Paul? (See 2 Cor. 1:8-11; 11:23-33; 12:7-10) yet through it all he could say, “I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. Convinced of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith...” (Phil. 1:21-25). Even Jesus would have preferred not to have to suffer (Matt. 26:38-42; Luke 12:49-50) but “nevertheless” suffered because it was God’s

will (see also Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 5:7-10; 10:5-10; 12:1-11).

The four friends who came “explain things” to Job were undoubtedly semi-nomadic leaders of “tribes” like himself, men who may have been his equals in rank, wealth, “wisdom” and influence. Eliphaz came from Teman (perhaps the first-born of Esau and the father of Teman (Gen. 36:11,15,42; 1 Chron. 1:36,53). Teman was in the vicinity of Petra (Edom) southeast of the Dead Sea. The Temanites had a reputation for wisdom (Jer. 49:7). Bildad came from Shuah, a place in Edom or Arabia—he was perhaps a descendant of one of the sons of Abraham and his concubine Keturah (Gen. 25:2). Zophar came from Naamah, the location of which is probably in the Shephelah (low-lands) of Judah (Josh. 15:41) which is the territory between the mountain-ridge of Judah and the plain of Philistia. Elihu was a Buzite. Buz was the brother of Uz (no kidding! Gen. 22:21) and son of Hanor. Buz is also mentioned with Tema and both were considered to be among the Arab tribes (Jer. 25:23). Elihu was of the family of Ram, and may have been an ancestor of David (32:2:a; Ruth 4:19-22). These four apparently came with good intentions—to mourn with Job and to try to comfort him with their “wisdom” about suffering. When these three “friends” of Job first saw him they did not even recognize him. Job’s “skin-disease” (whatever it was) had almost completely disfigured him. They joined Job in mourning—they lifted up their voices (wailed) and tore their clothing, and threw dust in the air (a gesture of anger and abhorrence). For seven days and nights—the time usually allotted to mourning for the dead—the four friends sat upon the ground. Modern Jews call mourning for the dead, “sitting shiva” (shiva means “seven”) No one spoke during that time because they could see that Job was in too much pain to engage in conversation. Comforters were not permitted to say word until the mourner opened the conversation (2:12-13). For Biblical mourning see Lev. 21:1-4,10,11; 10:6; 2 Sam. 1:2; Josh. 7:6; Isa. 22:12; Jer. 9:17-22; 12:4,11; 14:2; 23:10; 31:15,16; 14:3; Ezek. 34:14-15; 24:17,22, etc.).

Note first of all, Job did not “curse” God—Job cursed only the fact that he had been born. Note, second, Job considered “conception” to be birth and life (3:2). His inner turmoil is as great, or greater, than his physical (outer) torment. Job wishes he had died in infancy. Had he died in infancy he would have gone to “rest” where the great people, famous because of their status, rank, or wealth go in death. The point is, in death he would have been with honorable, even illustrious dead men who were “at rest” from their labors. He even wishes he had been born dead (“still-born”) (3:16). Job believed death brought peace and quiet to people of all ranks and stations. In death the small and the great are alike—released from the suffering of the flesh and the circumstances of the world in which the wicked trouble the righteous. You will notice there is no mention of what the “world of death” is like except “rest.” No mention of Paradise (K. 23:43), no mention of being in the presence of God, nothing like the book of Revelation’s description of heaven. The modern Jew (without believing the New Testament Scriptures as the word of God) is no better off than Job. I quote from Living Jewish, by Michael Asheri, 1978, Everest House Publishers, pp. 195-196: “The emphasis of Judaism is almost entirely on the observance of God’s commandments in this world and living the way a Jew should live. What happens after death we leave in God’s hands and He has revealed nothing concerning it....When he (Mashiach, or Messiah) arrives there will be a resurrection of the dead, called in Hebrew, T’chiat Hametim, and all the resurrected of the Jews will gather in Israel, there to live

forever...Nevertheless, if one were to say, 'While not denying what the sages have said, I have no belief concerning an aspect of the life after death or the world to come; all I believe is that my soul is in the hands of God and my faith is in him,' such a Jew would not be considered a heretic, even by the most pious." How different and blessed is the Christian view of life after death (1 Cor. 15:1-58; 2 Cor. 5:1-15; Phil. 1:20-23; Rev. 14:13; 21:1-7; 22:1-5).

Yes! Everyone who has ever suffered the slightest physical affliction has suffered, to some degree or other, a psychological trauma. Ever since the Garden of Eden when God cursed that part of his creation which is physical (Rom. 8:18-25) all the creation has been "groaning in travail together....groaning inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies." Job's psychological suffering (and all our own) finally resolves itself to asking the question, "Why does God not simply take the life of those who suffer rather than let them continue in their misery." WHY? "Why is the most traumatizing, vexing, perplexing pain suffered "inwardly" as we "groan" about the futility and bondage to decay of this creation! TRYING TO EXPLAIN SUFFERING BY RATIONALIZING (i.e. BY HUMAN REASON AND EXPERIENCE ALONE) CAUSES MENTAL AND PSYCHICAL PAIN AND ANGUISH! Job found he had no way to "maneuver" mentally and emotionally and psychologically (3:23)—he was "hedged in" by his lack of divine information. He certainly wasn't lacking in "human wisdom"—and what he might have lacked, his four friends were about to "supply."—BUT ALL IN VAIN AS TO WHY? Job couldn't get any rest, his mind was overwhelmed with dread, he even think about eating—his suffering poured over him like a constant pounding of the sea upon the shore—no relief—BUT WHY, GOD? What a blessing to be able to believe the apostle Peter's consoling words, "Cast all your anxieties on him, for he cares about you." (1 Pet. 5:7).

## JOB 4:1—7:21

Eliphaz claims to have received what he is saying to Job from some “mysterious messenger” from the realm of the spirit-world (4:12-16). James Smith seems to think Eliphaz is claiming “divine inspiration” for what he says to Job. The text nowhere says this “vision of the night, and form before his eyes, and voice” was that of Almighty God or even an angel sent from God. It is true, of course, that God spoke even to heathen people (including emperors, Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus) in visions—but they had to have an anointed “prophet” of God to tell them where their “vision” came from and what it was saying. Would Eliphaz lie about “seeing and hearing a vision”? I doubt it, but it remains that we should not be so quick to conclude that it was a divine revelation. Actually, later, God will say directly to Eliphaz, “My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends; for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.” (42:7). Eliphaz was astounded that Job was making such a vehement complaint about the calamities that have befallen him. Eliphaz believes Job, of all people should be able to cope with adversity. He believes Job’s piety (fear of the Lord) and his integrity should give him hope that the “Judge of all the earth is doing right” (Gen. 18:25). Besides, Job had often “instructed many, strengthened weak hands, upheld with words the stumbling and made firm the feeble knees (4:3-4). Eliphaz admonishes the suffering patriarch that Job is quite aware if he is innocent he will not perish, so he shouldn’t be wailing and weeping as he is. **NOW IT IS TIME FOR JOB TO PRACTICE WHAT HE HAS PREACHED TO OTHERS**, says Eliphaz. If we are quite honest with ourselves, we must all admit that at one time or another when we were being “preached-to” we’ve either said it, or wished we had said it----“Why don’t you shut up and practice what you preach!” Whatever “wise” words Eliphaz had for Job they went “in one ear and out the other” after Eliphaz admonished him to “practice what you have preached.” **THAT IS WHY THE APOSTLE JAMES SAYS, “BE NOT MANY OF YOU TEACHERS....FOR WE ALL MAKE MANY MISTAKES...”** (James 3:1-5). We must “let the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in the sight of God” (Psa. 19:14). **NOT MUCH HELP TO JOB...IS IT?**

The very fact of human mortality (death) is inexplicable apart from the Bible. Sir Bertrand Russell, famous mathematician, philosopher and pacifist was an atheist. He wrote, among his more than 40 books, a sarcastic and arrogant book entitled, *Why I Am Not a Christian*. In his Autobiography, page 287, he writes, as it were, his own epitaph: “Why should you suppose I think it foolish to wish to see the people one is fond of? What else is there to make life tolerable? We stand on the shore of an ocean, crying to the night and the emptiness; sometimes a voice answers out of the darkness. But it is the voice of one drowning; and in a moment the silence returns.” In other words, without God there is no hope in this world! **HUMAN MORTALITY IS, ITSELF, A DREADFUL, STARK, DARK TESTIMONY THAT HUMAN BEINGS ARE SINNERS!** “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth...so they are without excuse...receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their error” (Rom. 1:1,20,27). And, “They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness and the conflicting thoughts accuse or perhaps excuse them...” (Rom. 2:15).

The “voice” Eliphaz heard in the night was his human conscience (put there by God) reminding him that his mortality (eventual death) is a testimony that no mortal can be righteous on his own before God! God is so Absolutely Righteous that not even angels can be excused for errors (1 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; Rev. 12:1-12). Eliphaz is implying that Job should not be asking, “Why me Lord” when it is clear that mortals and angels who are sinners are punished by the Lord. NOW, IT MUST HAVE IMMEDIATELY REGISTERED ON JOB’S MIND THAT ELIPHAZ WAS ACCUSING JOB OF SOME “MORTAL” SIN. Not much help to Job here, either!

Eliphaz is making innuendoes that Job’s suffering is the consequence of some sin Job has done. First, Eliphaz indicates that God will not answer him (5:1) because Job’s complaint is wrong—he has sinned. Second Eliphaz strongly implies that Job has lost all his prosperity and his sons because he has been a “fool” sometime, somewhere, and has sinned against God (5:2-5). Third, Eliphaz simply says “affliction does not just ‘happen’”—i.e., it doesn’t come from the dust—it comes from God and thus Job is deserving what he is getting because of some sin (5:6). Finally, Eliphaz says “Man brings trouble on himself as surely sparks fly upward from a fire!” (5:7). The point Eliphaz is trying to make is that affliction is not accidental—men bring it upon themselves by the choices they make—mankind inclines toward sin which inevitably brings calamity upon himself. That is true to some extent—BUT NOT IN EVERY INSTANCE! True, if we “break” the “laws of nature” (i.e., the moral order of God’s creation), we will bring suffering upon ourselves (jump off a skyscraper and the “law of gravity” takes over. They will be scraping you up from the street, “deader than a door-nail”—become a drunkard and you will suffer liver and kidney and heart disease, etc. If we break the laws of social order (civil government) we will suffer the penalty for our crimes (theoretically). But there are people, like Job, who have lived righteous lives, never “breaking” the laws of nature or committing crimes against society—AND YET THEY SUFFER AFFLICTION! Such “unwarranted” suffering is inexplicable except for what the New Testament says about it! So Eliphaz is only half-right! And “half-right” is not going to satisfy Job’s lament! Since Adam’s and Eve’s sin in the Garden of Eden, God has subject this creation to futility and the bondage of decay (Rom. 8:18-27)—thus all human beings will suffer the dissolution and death of the physical body in some form or another. Some will “suffer” more pain in their death than others—but all must die for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven (1 Cor. 15:50-53). This “perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality.” BUT JOB DID NOT KNOW THE CERTAINTY OF THAT AS WE DO NOW THAT JESUS CHRIST HAS WORKED OUT OUR REDEMPTION. HE DIED VICARIOUSLY FOR US AND AROSE FROM THE DEAD FOR OUR JUSTIFICATION. So Eliphaz was somewhat correct that humankind is “born to trouble as the sparks fly upward” for we have all sinned and thus merit the death of this perishable body. But it isn’t much consolation that all mankind must suffer the penalty of physical pain for the sins of Adam and Eve!

Eliphaz and his companions believed in the “health and wealth” theology. They believed if you were not hiding any secret sins—but confessing them to God, God would always prosper such a “righteous” person with good health and lots of prosperity! They believed that if anyone suffered affliction in this life, it was inevitable that such a one would suffer affliction and loss of wealth. THAT, OF COURSE, IS NOT THE CASE!

King David saw Saul prospering when he (David) was having to flee for his life and live in caves and cried out to God, “Why?” Jesus told the parable of the rich man and the beggar (Luke 16) to indicate that some never suffer any deprivation or affliction in this life—until they get to the next life. Someone pointed out to Jesus, once, that Pilate had slain some Galileans and thus they must have been terrible sinners. Jesus’ reply was, “Do you think that these Galileans (and those upon whom the Tower of Siloam fell and killed them) were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered thus? I tell you, No; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:1-5). Another time Jesus and his disciples passed by a “blind man from his birth” and the disciples asked, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus replied, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him” (John 9:1-3). **RIGHTEOUSNESS DOES NOT PROTECT ANY HUMAN BEING FROM AFFLICTION IN THIS LIFE!** Righteousness didn’t protect Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Paul, Peter, or even Jesus from physical affliction in this life. It is the next life in which the righteous (disciples of Jesus) shall be protected from all sorrow, pain, suffering and eternal death (2 Cor. 5:1-10; Rev. 7:15-17; 21:1-4; 22:1-5). This life is a “soul-making” journey (i.e., a character-making experience)—“suffering produces endurance and endurance produces character” (Rom. 5:3-4). Therefore, God allows all people to “suffer” in hopes that they will be “conformed to the image of his Son” (Rom. 8:28-29).

The only comfort which Job can conceive is death! What tremendous suffering he was enduring! Most human beings cling to life in this world with great tenacity. We try to postpone it as long as possible with exercise, dieting, doctors, as little risk-taking as possible, etc., etc. But there comes a time in the life for many a God-loving and God-serving “saint” when physical pain and mental suffering reaches the point where death is to be preferred to life. Jesus cried out more than once that his soul was “troubled unto death” (John 12: 27; Luke 12:50; Matt. 26:38; Heb. 5:7-9, etc.). Paul “desired to depart and be with Christ for it would be very far better” (Phil. 1:23). David despaired of living while under persecution from Saul (see the Psalms). Jeremiah “cursed the day he was born” (Jer. 29:9ff). **IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR US TO CRITICIZE JOB’S LAMENT FOR DEATH UNLESS “WE HAD WALKED IN HIS MOCCASINS.”** The psychological burden he was bearing was as excruciating as his physical pain----**HE COULDN’T UNDERSTAND WHY HE SHOULD BE SO AFFLICTED IN LIGHT OF HOW MUCH HE HAD SERVED GOD IN HIS LIFE!** Personally, I don’t believe we can fault Job for wanting to die to be rid of his pain. But we notice that he did not contemplate suicide, and when his wife suggested he curse God and die, Job called her a fool! So, Job steadfastly endured (James 5:11)—and that is why the Lord directed James to use Job as an example of steadfast faith! Evidently, God did not condemn Job for wishing to die. God reprimanded Job only for thinking he knew all the answers to life!

The ancient caravans would turn aside from the flooded wadis (creeks) only to wander into the deserts where they were confounded and often perished. So, Job says, are my “friends.” They have come and found me “overflowing” with pain and ugliness and complaint—and they have turned away from me. They saw a man in a horrid condition and were afraid. But even worse, they were certain that his calamity was an act of God’s punishment for some “secret” sin Job would not confess. Instead of

extending sympathy and as much help as they could, they competed with one another to rebuke him (6:24-27). Knowing Job's history of being helpful and compassionate before his calamity, it is certain that he would have responded differently had any of the "four friends" offered some physical help and some psychological sympathy—BUT NOT A WORD OF COMFORT DID THEY OFFER—NOT A "STITCH" OF PHYSICAL HELP DID THEY OFFER! Job is not being "harsh" with his friends—he's telling the truth—they offered nothing but criticism against him accusing him of "trying to hide some sin" from God. It reminds one of the famous line on the "Hee-Haw" song, "If I had no bad luck, I'd have no luck at all!" Job had not asked them for any physical help (6:22-23). Job asks only for "words that would help him understand why such calamity had befallen him" from his "friends." But all he gets are insinuations, illogical deductions, and criticisms of Job's language toward God! Job knows that he is not guilty of their accusations. The greatest service one can perform is to be a friend to someone. Friendship is not only doing something for someone, but it is caring for someone, which is what every person needs. To love and be loved is the greatest happiness in existence. Job's "friends" very evidently did not love him—they loved their "wisdom."

Jean Paul Sartre, famous French existential philosopher, in his book, *Nausea*, has one of his characters say, "Every existent is born without reason, prolongs itself out of weakness and dies by chance." Sartre said that the key to life was its fundamental absurdity. He said, "man is a useless passion." I think it was another existential philosopher, Albert Camus, who wrote, "Life is never more absurd than at the grave." Samuel Langhorne Clemens (better known as "Mark Twain"), in his autobiography, gave his personal testimony about his view of life: "A myriad of men are born; they labor and sweat and struggle for bread; they squabble and scold and fight; they scramble for little mean advantages over each other. Age creeps upon them and infirmities follow; shames and humiliations bring down their prides and their vanities. Those they love are taken from them, and the joy of life is turned to aching grief. The burden of pain, care, and misery, grows heavier year by year. At length ambition is dead, pride is dead, vanity is dead; longing for release is in their place. It comes at last—the only unpoisoned gift earth ever had for them—and they vanish from a world where they were of no consequence; where they achieved nothing, where they were a mistake and a failure and a foolishness; where they left no sign that they have existed—a world that will lament them a day and forget them forever." —Autobiography, Vol. II, p. 37. All of the above skeptics based their despair and depressing pessimism on the "God is dead" philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) and the Darwinian theory of evolution. WITH A PRESUPPOSITION THAT THERE IS NO GOD, THEN THERE IS ABSOLUTE SILENCE ABOUT SUFFERING AND AFFLICTION. Job did not presuppose God was dead—only that God would remain silent about vindicating Job as a "righteous man" and thus silent about the reason for his calamity. Jesus Christ brought "life and immortality (eternal life) to light through the Gospel." Life for those who trust in Jesus can never be absurd. Those who believe in Jesus trust that when the great universal judgment of Almighty God ensues, all the human suffering for all mankind, for all time, will be explained and bring glory to God and vindication to those who suffered and yet trusted in Christ! "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain" (1 Cor. 15:58).

Job is feeling a little sorry for himself! Wouldn't you? It seems to him as if God is "after" him. Job addresses God with the statement that he is no threat or danger that might demand the attention of the Almighty. He argues that he is too weak to deserve the continued harassment from God. He breaks out into a passionate cry that he loathes (hates) his life. He argues that he is too insignificant to command the unrelenting attention of God. He complains that God could at least give him a moment's rest. Job argues that sin cannot affect God, so sin should not be the reason for the afflictions which people must suffer. This last point is continually raised in this book—God is too high to be affected by what a person does in this world, whether his actions are sinful or righteous. Finally, Job argues that God should simply forgive him of whatever sin he may have committed, not continue to punish him for some transgression of which he was unaware. Forgiveness of his sin would restore fellowship between him and God. Job is certain that he is about to "lie down in the dust" (die). Once that happens, it will be too late for God to seek after him—and God will miss him when he's gone! Job does not understand that God is "after him" to bring him a tremendous blessing. Job's lament reminds me of the majestic poem by Francis Thompson, *The Hound of Heaven*, and the first stanza says: "I fled Him, down the nights and down the days; I fled Him, down the arches of the years; I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways Of my own mind; and in the midst of tears I hid from Him, and under running laughter. Up vistaed hopes I sped; and shot, precipitated, Adown Titanic glooms of chasmed fears, From those strong Feet that followed, followed after. But with unhurrying chase, And unperturbed pace, Deliberate speed, majestic instancy, They beat—and a Voice beat More instant than the Feet—'All things betray thee, who betrayest Me.'" Humankind in its afflictions, thinks of itself as being "chased by the Hound of Heaven." AND IT IS! GOD IS CHASING US! GOD HAS "DETERMINED ALLOTTED PERIODS AND THE BOUNDARIES OF OUR HABITATION, THAT WE SHOULD SEEK HIM" (Acts 17:26-27). And Francis Thompson makes that conclusion when he reaches the end of his magnificent poem. God pursues us through both his "goodness" (Rom. 2:4) and his "afflictions" (Rom. 8:18-30). GOD IS "THE HOUND OF HEAVEN." WE MUST UNDERSTAND FROM OUR NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES THAT THE "HOUND OF HEAVEN" (GOD) IS AFTER US TO SHOWER UPON US "AN ETERNAL WEIGHT OF GLORY BEYOND ALL COMPARISON" (2 Cor. 4:16-18).

## JOB 8:1—10:22

Bildad is a young, “still-wet-behind-the-ears” “know -it-all.” Bildad ignored much of what Job had been pleading in his long complaint and went directly to the point—the very idea that Job would complain to God. Bildad thinks he is so well schooled in the “wisdom of the ancient sages” that Job will be brought to his senses by Bildad’s harangue. Bildad feigns shock that any man would speak to God as Job had. Insensitive to Job’s suffering, Bildad presumes that Job would agree that his children had been punished for sin against God (8:3-4). Bildad’s remonstrance with Job is based on Bildad’s assumption that all suffering is a punishment for particular sins (which is not true as Jesus pointed out in Luke 13:1-4; John 9:2-3). Paul’s suffering of the “thorn in the flesh” was not for some egregious sin Paul had committed—it was to make him rely on God’s sufficient grace! Bildad was absolutely certain that Job had sinned (perhaps not as terribly as his children (8:5-7) and his afflictions were punishments from God for his sins. Job needed, according to Bildad, to make himself upright and pure and if he did God would restore his fortunes. Bildad’s “tunnel vision” could only focus on the idea that poverty means you have offended God and he has punished you—riches means that you are righteous and God has blessed you! Bildad exemplifies the insolence and presumed erudition of youth (too much “smarts”). He thought he knew more than Job and the other “friends” and was not bashful about letting his “smarts” be known! He had not lived nearly as long as Job and the other “mullahs” of the desert, but he believed he was wiser than they. He was a young man “wise in his own eyes” and needed the admonitions of James 3:1-18. His tongue was a scorching fire to the soul of Job.

Bildad’s presumptuous advice to Job was “Inquire, I pray you, of bygone ages, and consider what the fathers have found” (8:8-10). There is no good whatsoever in inquiring of the philosophical rationalizations (i.e., the “wisdom of the sages”) of former generations about suffering in trying to “straighten-out” someone who is suffering. **WHAT THE SUFFERING NEED IS THE SOOTHING, SOUL-HEALING, SPIRIT-LIFTING PROMISES OF GOD!** It is through the “precious promises of God that we escape the corruption that is in the world and are made partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pet. 1:3-5). When the believing thief was dying on a cross next to Jesus, it was the precious promise of Jesus, “Today, thou shall be with me in Paradise” that helped him get through that excruciating torture of death by crucifixion. It was for the joy that was set before him that Jesus was able to endure the cross (Heb. 12:1). It was the precious promise that God’s grace was sufficient for Paul that made him able to bear his thorn in the flesh—not the “wisdom of the Pharisees” in which Paul was “tops” (Phil. 3:4-11). I have had occasion to comfort numerous people who were suffering much pain and the prospect of imminent death, but not one of them ever said, “Read me some of the works of the philosophers of the world.” They all with one accord asked me either to pray for them or read them some scriptures from God’s Word. Soldiers, dying on the battlefields, do not cry out for a “philosopher”—they cry out for God and for a “chaplain” to pray for them or speak to them some word from God! The suffering simply need someone to say, “I care and I’m praying to the merciful God for you.” Bildad could not bring himself to say that to Job—he wanted to refer Job to the human wisdom of the

ages which amounts to nothing when you are the sufferer! Philosophy cannot even “find” God because God reveals himself apart from and contrary to human rationalizations—God reveals himself in his Word—through his prophets, his Son, and his apostles.

James Smith says: “A two-fold analysis of this (Job 9:1—10:22) speech seems best. Job speaks of (a) the might of God which prohibits man from making a credible defense of his innocence; and (b) the mind of God which alone holds the key to the mystery of suffering.” We will discuss (a) in this question and (b) in question 4. Job admits (9:1-4) that God is almighty and anyone who hardens himself against God will suffer punishment (but, Job does not believe he has hardened himself against the Almighty). Job admits that God’s mightiness and transcendence is clearly apparent in the works of creation and no human “can stay God’s hand.” Death eventually conquers all flesh—“Behold, he snatches away; who can hinder him? Who will say to him, ‘What doest thou?’” Job’s paean of praise to the Almighty was “dittoed” by Nebuchadnezzar after this Babylonian emperor’s “conversion” (Dan. 4:34-37) and Darius, the emperor of Persia (Dan. 6:25-27). If we had only “nature” (creation) by which to understand God—we would come to the same conclusion as Job, Nebuchadnezzar and Darius and David (Psa. 19:1ff). GOD’S OMNIPOTENCE AND OMNISCIENCE AND TRANSCENDENCE IS “CLEARLY PERCEIVED IN THE THINGS THAT HAVE BEEN MADE” (Acts 14:15-18; 17:24-20; Rom. 1:18-21). If all we had was the creation by which to see God we would see him as one whose wrath is revealed from heaven upon sin for the whole creation is clearly “subjected to futility...and bondage to decay” (Rom. 8:18-25). The One whose power is everywhere evident in creation is himself invisible! Yet the power of this invisible One is irresistible—nobody dares question that power when it is being displayed (9:11-12). If all we had was the display of the power of An Invisible One, we might want to fashion some representation of Him in stone, gold, or silver. We might want to try to think up some way to appease the wrath or court the favor of this Invisible One by “sacrifices and worshiping of the ‘works’ of the Invisible One.” The only escape from the dilemma of trying to find an Invisible Deity is if the Deity reveals himself in human language through miracle-certified spokesmen (prophets, etal.). Prophets were at a premium in Job’s day. God spoke to Job’s patriarchal ancestors directly, and the messages they received were, so far as we know, handed down from generation to generation through God-fearing patriarchs and leaders of families (e.g. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc.). So far as we know, in Job’s day there was no written word of God. NO WONDER JOB AND HIS “FRIENDS” HAD TO HAVE SUCH A LONG DISCUSSION OF WHY HUMAN BEINGS SUFFER—THEY WERE PRIMARILY “GUESSING” AT IT!

Job is convinced (by “nature”) that no one can “choose” words sufficient to answer this Invisible and Silent One, even if this One should question a human being! (9:13-15). Job portrays what would happen if God did actually respond to his human reasoning—God would not listen to Job’s plea, but would crush him with his Infinite Power. Already, Job says, The Invisible One has “crushed me with a tempest, multiplied my wounds without cause, will not even let me get my breath, and fills me with bitterness” (9:16-18). So, Job feels the hopelessness of expecting to legally argue his case and get justice from God. Even though Job believes in his heart he is a righteous man—he despairs of being able to persuade such an Omnipotent and Omniscient One as the Almighty Creator. Though he believes he has right on his side, his own mouth

would condemn him when trying to plead his case in the court of the Almighty. God's overbearing power would overwhelm any of Job's attempts to prove he was innocent and blameless. Many a Christian has had the same feeling during a period of severe suffering. Even the apostle Paul felt "utterly, unbearably crushed (and) despaired of life itself" in some of his afflictions in Asia (2 Cor. 1:8-9) and felt he had received the sentence of death—but through it all he came to understand that it was all to "make (him) rely not on (himself) but on God who raises the dead." David, the "sweet singer of Israel" often cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but thou dost not answer; and by night but find no rest." (Psa. 22:1-2; see also Psa. 10:1; 13:1-2; 38:1-22; 69:1-3; 88:1-18). Asaph, too, had his moments (Psa. 74:1-11; 83:1). The prophet Habakkuk wondered about a Silent God (Habakkuk 1:1-17). YOU SEE, EVEN SOME OF THE GREAT "BELIEVERS" OF THE BIBLE HAD TIMES OF DOUBT—ESPECIALLY IN TIMES OF SUFFERING. It is not wrong to question, to wonder, to be perplexed, even confounded—but it is right to believe that God will eventually bring everything to justice—he will "soon" make everything RIGHT—which is that to which a true "believer" must cling in times of deep despair and depression

Job is persuaded that he is totally helpless in the face of the might and power of the Lord. He suddenly bursts out in reckless abandon and decides to "take his life in his own hands" by asserting his case before God. Job is sure that such bold assertiveness will provoke God to terminate his life instantly. He might as well, he says, because "It is all one" (i.e., Almighty God destroys both the wicked and the righteous—indiscriminately). This is Job's spiritual low point in the whole book. In his desperation he perceives God as the Omnipotent, Silent One who prefers wickedness to righteousness. Job rationalizes, "God had permitted injustice to prevail throughout the earth, and especially to him (Job) the righteous—apparently God mocks at the calamity of the innocent Job. God even "covers the faces of the judges" so that they cannot see the right to give justice to the innocent. Job is charging that God does not just permit wrong, God causes wrong to have the upper hand. If God is not responsible for the prevailing wickedness in the world—then who is (9:23-24). Job has come to the "end of his rope." His excruciating suffering and God's silence is the "straw that has broken the back of the camel." Job has psychologically gone down into the depths of Sheol. He is where Hezekiah was when he was sick unto death (Isa. 38:1-15). BUT JOB WILL COME OUT OF IT (OR THROUGH IT).

Every complaining, dumbfounded, pleading, begging, angry "saint" (believer) who will surrender in "gut-level" faith to God's love and mercy—will find that God has MEDIATED himself as a human and demonstrated, once for all, his mercy for the suffering believer! Job's lament was that "God is not a man, as I am, that I might answer him, that we should come to trial together—there is no umpire (or "mediator") is answered in Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:21-26; Heb. 2:5-18; 10:5-18. Job knew that sacrifices of "bulls and goats" could never "make perfect" or "cleanse the conscience" of a sinful human being (Heb. 10:1-4). Every human being who is honest with himself knows that a Perfect God cannot be appeased by the sacrifices of amoral, imperfect animals and "things." A Perfect God has to be appeased by the sacrifice of a Perfect, Moral, Human. Divine wrath upon human sin has to be atoned for by a Willing, Perfect Human Being. THAT IS WHAT JOB WAS PLEADING FOR (Job 9:30-35). Job was

sure that if he could “find” such a MEDIATOR, the Mediator could “lay his hand upon both Perfect God and sinful man and plead his case. Job believed such a divine-human “umpire” justify him—his faith in God’s justness would be reckoned unto him as righteousness (Gen. 15:6). Job’s problem was that he knew only a TRANSCENDENT God—not one who had become IMMANENT! Christians do not have that problem! They know that the Father was manifested and suffered and conquered sin in the flesh (Rom. 8:1-8) in Jesus Christ of Nazareth. God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, (any law of any time—patriarchal, Mosaic, etc.) could not do; sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh.” “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, the testimony to which was borne at the proper time.” (1 Tim. 2:5-6).

Job “loathes his life.” He is wishing he could die (as Jonah did when God did not manifest divine justice as Jonah thought he ought, Jonah 4:1-9). As James Smith points out, “Job begins to make (10:1-22) various suppositions as to why God has treated him so harshly.” The first supposition is: “Does God delight in oppression?” (10:3-7). Does God see as man sees—is God mortal? Does God know Job is righteous and should not be oppressed? The second supposition is: “Did God predestine suffering?” (10:8-13). “You made me God! Did you make me just so I would suffer?” Isn’t it interesting that here Job knows enough to know that God forms a living being in the womb of a mother! That so-called “fetus” is a human being. Abortionists, beware! Job asks, “Did you form me from the time of my conception to suffer like I’m suffering? You took such exquisite care to form me in the womb—was it all the better for preparing me to suffer as I’m suffering?” No! Job answers his own perplexity. Apparently there is no sin in preferring death to suffering. Even the Lord Jesus cried out, “Now is my soul troubled even unto death—Father if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” **HOWEVER, THERE IS NO BIBLICAL SANCTION FOR SUICIDE OR EUTHANASIA!** Those who are God’s saints are expected to endure suffering and trial until the Lord himself decides to “call them home” (2 Cor. 5:1-10; Phil. 1:23-24). Christians are not allowed the “luxury” of taking their own lives in order to end their suffering. **GOD’S GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR THEM!**

Job must have known there was life after death (see Job 13:15; 19:25; 23:10; 42:6). But driven to despair by his conclusion about God’s purpose regarding him, Job asks: “Why did God ever give me existence at all?” Job wishes he had never been born, or that he had been born dead. It would have been better had he given up the spirit of life and no human eye had ever seen him (10:18-22). Job does not use the word “Sheol” in this text—his favorite word for the grave (Job 10:22; 23:17; 28:3; 30:26; 38:9) is the Hebrew word *aphailoh* (“thick fog”); once he uses the word *arophel* (“thick darkness” 22:13) and once he uses *sheol* (“the pit” 14:13) and four times he uses the word *shokhath* (“destruction” 33:18,24,28,30). The “grave” or “Sheol” is the OT name for the subterranean place of departed souls, corresponding to the NT word “Hades” (Lk. 16:23). The word “Sheol” occurs 65 times in the OT and is sometimes translated “hell” 31 times in the KJV, “the grave” 31 times, and “the pit” 3 times. The reason for this variety of translation is that “hell” is ordinarily thought of as a place of punishment, and so “grave” is substituted when the reference is to the souls of good men; e.g., Jacob said that he would go down into the “grave” mourning for his son (Gen. 17:35), and Job

prayed, "Oh that thou wouldest hide me in the grave" (Job 14:13). In the ASV, the word is not translated but merely transliterated "Sheol," without any attempt to theorize as to its meaning. "Sheol" is represented as being inside the earth. Num. 16:30,33 pictures the earth opening and swallowing up Korah and his company so that they went down alive to Sheol. Amos 9:2-4 names five places in which the enemies of Jehovah might attempt to hide from him, but from whence he would bring them. Though the original sense may refer merely to a hollow place, it is quite commonly thought of as a place of punishment; e.g. "The wicked shall be turned into Sheol (Psa. 9:17), and certainly of severe discomfort (Psa. 116:3), "The pains of Sheol got hold upon me," through the Messianic prophecy of Psalm 16:10, "For thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol," quoted in the first Christian sermon (Acts 2:27), certainly could not refer to punishment. A large part of the confusion of thought concerning Sheol arises from the invisibility of the soul. Since it is difficult to conceive the idea of space in connection with invisible beings, Sheol often means the place or state of the soul between death and resurrection when the soul will be joined with a spiritual body (1 Cor. 15:42-49). The clearest indication of different conditions in Sheol is in our Lord's parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31), where the rich man is pictured as in torment, while Lazarus was in "Abraham's bosom."

## JOB 11:1—14:22

Zophar is the most vitriolic of Job's "counselors." Zophar does not appeal to personal experience as did Eliphaz; nor to the wisdom of the ancients, as did Bildad; no, Zophar considers his authority to speak identical with God's authority—his wisdom is self-authenticating. Zophar felt compelled to reply to Job's lament lest Job think that by his many words he had proved his point (11:1-3). He believed Job was "boasting" of his innocence when he wasn't innocent at all (11:4). Zophar just knew that if God would only speak, God would set Job straight about his guilt and that would be the answer to the reason Job was suffering so much. Zophar claims that Job should be thankful that he does not get all the suffering that he deserves (11:5-6). Zophar had concluded that Job's words were mocking the "wisdom of the ancients" and that Job was just mouthing off when he didn't know what he was talking about. If God would only speak, he would expose Job as a "guilty sinner" (11:7-12). **WHAT KIND OF HELP IS THAT TO A SUFFERING MAN? NONE!** Zophar will not even wait to find the "evidence of two or three witnesses" (1 Tim. 5:19) to Job's guilt. He just presupposes Job is guilty because he is suffering. He did not "exhort the elder Job as he would a father" (1 Tim. 5:1)—he verbally assaulted him! He gave Job a "tongue-lashing." Zophar considered himself much superior to Job in the knowledge of God and God's ways. Are there professing Christians today who might be "Zophars"? Are there any Christians today who, apart from quoting Scripture, think their "advice" or "opinions" are equal to God's word? **WHAT KIND OF HELP WOULD SUCH AN ARROGANT AND MISLED PERSON BE TO ONE WHO IS SUFFERING? THE BEST THAT CAN BE DONE FOR A SUFFERER IS TO ACTUALLY READ SOME OF THE "PRECIOUS PROMISES OF GOD" DIRECTLY FROM THE SCRIPTURES!**

The Hebrew pronoun "you" is emphatic (11:13). Zophar is pleading with Job that he not be like the "worthless and stupid" men who will not recognize (Zophar's) wisdom because Zophar is so sure his tirade is from God. Zophar calls Job to do four things: (a) Get his heart right with God; (b) pray to God for forgiveness; (c) reform his life-style to conform to God's expectations; and (d) set his entire household in order. **ZOPHAR IS PRESSURING JOB TO CONFESS HIS GUILT AND TURN AWAY FROM HIS SIN (WHATEVER THAT SIN MIGHT BE—AND ZOPHAR IS SURE JOB IS SINNING)!** Pressuring sinners to try to convert them is the wrong approach! God doesn't even do that! There is a difference between concerned and caring admonition and pressuring! The "line" between the two may seem indistinguishable to some, but it's there! Jesus never "pressured" anyone (e.g., not the disciples, not the rich young ruler, not Judas, not his own family, not Zacchaeus, not the 5000—no one!). Jesus tried to persuade people to believe him. He told them the truth and pled with them, but he did not exert coercion, force, or employ any cunning to get people to believe and follow him. Paul always went into the Jewish synagogues and "reasoned with them from the Scriptures whether Jesus was the Christ or not." Jesus used logic with the Pharisees (Matt. 12:22-32) and appealed to sinners to believe on him on the basis of the evidence he had presented for his claims (e.g., John 10:37-38). **THAT MUST BE THE APPROACH THE CHURCH TAKES TODAY IN EVANGELISM—NOT TRYING TO "ENTERTAIN" THEM, OR PRESSURE THEM, OR TRICK THEM INTO THE KINGDOM**

OF GOD. Paul said, “Knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men” (2 Cor. 5:11).

Today’s English Version translates 12:1, “Yes, you are the voice of the people. When you die, wisdom will die with you.” Job was stung by Zophar’s harshness. Zophar’s diatribe stressed the omniscience of God before which men should silence all complaint. Three of Job’s four “friends” have spoken and unanimously refused to accept Job’s claim to righteousness and integrity. Job turns on his “pseudo-counselors” with biting sarcasm and we might paraphrase him, “You must be the only people in the world that know anything about wisdom!” Job is not about to let these “friends” insinuate that he was stupid, or that they knew more about God than he. “I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you!” The knowledge which Zophar thought was so profound was really common knowledge. Everybody knew what Zophar had said about God’s wisdom to be true (12:3). In days past Job had called upon the Lord and had experienced answers to his prayers. Now Job has become a “joke” to his friends. This man who formerly was considered “just” and “blameless” is now considered to be a spiritual ignoramus. Job is not going to take that lying down! He will defend himself, with satire, if necessary! The knowledge of God flaunted by the friends of Job was really not that profound. Anyone who had eyes to observe “nature” could have as much knowledge of God’s wisdom and power Job’s three Arab “friends.” This discourse of Job reveals the futility of dialogue between persons whose ultimate presuppositions contradict one another. Job and his friends have different view of God’s transcendence and immanence within nature and history. So Job responds with satire! Caricature, satire, irony and sarcasm are acceptable vehicles of communicating God’s word! Moses used it in the Pentateuch, the OT prophets used it, Jesus used it, the apostles used it! The examples are too numerous to list here (Isa. 1:3 & 44:1-20 are classic examples). Paul used sarcasm and irony and caricature in writing to the Corinthians—calling them “spiritual babies.” Jesus used it when he called Herod, “that fox.” Bible preachers and teachers should use it more often—not in a mean spirit, but in a winsome, prodding, admonishing spirit.

Without the Incarnation of God in human form in Jesus Christ and his “good news” (gospel), suffering DOES lead people to reason that God is arbitrary in his works! That this is the case is confirmed by the NT scriptures (Rom. 1:18-32; 8:18-25; Eph. 2:1-3, etal.). Although God’s power may be applied with loving kindness and beneficence, Job sees only destructive violence and human ruin. Job presents examples what appears to him of God’s amoral (arbitrary) behavior by a series of the extremes in “nature” (creation) and the history of individuals and of the rise and fall of nations. Job describes a God who ferrets out plots and conspiracies from the deepest darkness. Before God there is no hiding place. Nothing designed by man can be hidden from the sovereign Lord of creation. Even Sheol cannot hide its prey from him. Job portrays men groping in unrelieved darkness. They grope as blind men and stagger or wander (12:24). When God removes understanding, people continue to move and function, but purposelessly (Psa. 107:27; Isa. 19:14; 24:20; Rom. 1:18ff; Prov. 29:1). Life is meaningless to millions in our present world because nothing and no one organizes their lives meaningfully. Without Jesus Christ and his New Revelation (Testament), people have only an “amoral” (arbitrary) creation which has been “subjected to futility and the bondage of decay) what else can they think and believe about God? SUFFERING MAKES NO SENSE—LIFE IS WITHOUT MEANING—

EXCEPT FOR THE SUFFERING OF THE INCARNATED GOD IN JESUS CHRIST! IT IS CHRIST WHO “HOLDS ALL THINGS TOGETHER” (John 1:1-18; Col. 1:17; Eph. 1:10).

Job accused his “friends” of lying to him (13:4) because they were literally “plastering-over” (Heb. tiphelyi-shaker, “white-washing-with-lies”) the true condition of Job’s character with what was false. He was “blameless, upright, had integrity, and was not some horrendous sinner” and he knew it. That does not mean he considered himself perfectly without sin of any kind. It simply means he sincerely believed that God was not punishing him for some outrageous, impenitent, blatant rebellion against God (as his friends were implying). They were “smearing” lies over God’s government of the world (as Job saw it) so as to cover up all its hideous defects and give it a fair appearance. Job believed their’s to be a false “world-view.” He considered his “world-view” the correct one! He calls them “worthless physicians” because they were pretending to come to “heal” Job’s problem. They were simply covering it over with their false interpretations of God’s governance of the world. Job charges them with partiality for God. They are acting like advocates for God and ignoring the facts in Job’s circumstances. They had no personal knowledge of any guilt in Job’s life, yet they assumed he was guilty of some egregious sin. They took God’s part in the argument, not because they had facts to back them, but because of their superficial theology and somewhat-superstition for the “wisdom of the sages.” Today’s world is filled with “white-washing-liars” (humanistic philosophy, psychology and theology) plastering over the reality of God’s revealed word about all aspects of life here and hereafter! **TODAY’S “LIARS” ARE ALSO “WORTHLESS PHYSICIANS”—THEY HAVE NO HOPEFUL, SOUND, HISTORICALLY-SANCTIONED ANSWERS FOR SUFFERING AND EVIL, SO THEY RELY ON HUMANISTIC “WISDOM OF THE PHILOSOPHERS.”**

Job is desperate. He abandons any hope of relief from his sufferings by “philosophizing” about it! He is willing to “take his life into his own hands, so, with abandoned desperation Job prepares to challenge God. The KJV translation of 13:15 is not grammatically correct. The KJV says, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust Him; even so I will defend my own ways before Him.” As much as one might wish to cling to this rendering for sentimental reasons, the Hebrew text really points in a different direction. Literally, the verse reads, as in the RSV, “Behold, he shall slay me, I shall not wait; but my ways to his face I will defend.” Job anticipated that God would slay him for what he was about to say! He would not wait for a death in the more distant future. He would speak his piece and accept that God would slay him for it! Absolutely nothing will cause Job to refrain from defending his innocence. He knows his suffering is not self-entailed. The very fact that Job wishes to risk his life defending his innocence before God indicates that he is a righteous man (13:16)! Job is certain of ultimate vindication. Job asks of Almighty God just two things; (a) that God would withdraw his hand of suffering from Job; and (b) that God wouldn’t terrorize him so that he couldn’t speak. If these two conditions are met Job believes he is capable of presenting his case or answering any charges God might have against him (13:20-22). Job begins his plea with a request to know the number of sins God may have against him. He is referring to “big” transgressions. Job does not claim to be sinless (13:26)—he knows he made mistakes when he was young; what he is denying now is that he is guilty of any sins of such magnitude as to account for the extremity of his present condition. Job asks why God is

hiding his face from him—as if Job is some great “enemy” of God. Job feels like God has imprisoned him in “stocks”—is watching his every move—has drawn a line beyond which he cannot physically go. God has him “in a bind” where Job cannot defend himself unless God gives him some relief from his present condition. If he gets that he will be able to persuade God that he does not deserve to be so severely punished! AS CHRISTIANS, WE MAY BE THANKFUL THAT WE HAVE BEEN INVITED, BECAUSE OF THE VICARIOUS DEATH OF CHRIST FOR ALL OUR SINS, TO COME BOLDLY (“WITH CONFIDENCE” RSV) TO THE THRONE OF GRACE (HEB. 4:16; EPH. 3:11-12); TO ENTER INTO THE SANCTUARY WITH BOLDNESS (“CONFIDENCE” RSV); DRAW NEAR WITH A TRUE HEART IN FULL ASSURANCE (HEB. 10:21), AND BOLDLY SAY, THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID, WHAT CAN MAN DO TO ME? (HEB. 13:6); AND HAVE BOLDNESS (“CONFIDENCE” RSV) IN THE DAY OF JUDGMENT (1 JOHN 4:17). We do not “risk” anything by boldly taking our “cares” to God as Christians, because we do so “by the blood of Jesus” (Heb. 10:19-25). WE SHALL NOT LOSE ANYTHING—WE SHALL ONLY GAIN BY OUR BOLDNESS TOWARD GOD IN CHRIST!

It is quite paradoxical that Job, who has been so preoccupied with his own miserable condition, should take time to empathize with the rest of humanity, moaning, “Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He comes forth like a flower, and withers; he flees like a shadow, and continues not.” He mourns, “And dost thou (God) open thy eyes upon such a one and bring him into judgment with thee?” Job is pleading, “Isn’t it enough God that you have him trapped in an existence of trouble—look away from him, and desist, that he may enjoy, like a hireling, his day.” JOB IS SAYING WITH POGO, “I HAVE FOUND THE ENEMY, AND HE IS US!” “Woe is humankind!” Job’s “reality check” that all humanity is in the “same boat” as he is evidence that Job did have a heart of compassion! Most people get so focused on their own troubles that they “can’t see the forest for the trees” (i.e., all they can see as having troubles is themselves). We all need, in the midst of our personal troubles, to stand back and be more objective (rather than subjective) and acknowledge that there just may be others who are suffering troubles much more severe than our own! The great apostle Paul was able to do that. While he had so many troubles of his own he couldn’t count them (2 Cor. 11), he was able to be very empathetic with the troubles of Christians all over the Roman empire whom he had converted to Christ (e.g. his epistles).

Job did not believe that death ended personal existence. He desired only that God “hide” him in Sheol (14:13) and “conceal” him until God’s wrath had passed and then God would appoint him a set time to come face to face with him. Job’s soliloquy, “If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my service I would wait, till my release should come” in 14:14-17 indicates Job expected “release” from Sheol (the “intermediate” place of the departed dead). Job believed if he could die and rest in Sheol that God would ultimately “call” Job from there and Job would answer—God would long to be with “the work of his hands” (Job), and Job’s transgressions would all be covered up. The old patriarchs certainly believed that God could raise people from the dead (Heb. 11:19, 35). Paul said the Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead (Acts 23:6). The OT pictures the faithful of God being “gathered to their people” (e.g. Gen. 25:8). David believed God would not leave his “anointed” (which applied first

to David, then to the Messiah) in Sheol (Psa. 16:10). When David's first son by Bathsheba died, David said, "I shall go to him, but he will not return to me" (2 Sam. 12:23). Surely, David did not believe his son had been obliterated in death or he would not have anticipated going to him. King Saul believed enough in existence after death that he went to a woman necromancer (one who supposedly could contact the dead) to try to communicate with Samuel—AND DID SAUL EVER GET THE SURPRISE OF HIS LIFE. God brought Samuel from "Sheol" to talk with Saul! Yes! The OT saints believed in life after death, but they did not have the advantage we have in Christ who has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. HOW WE OUGHT TO BE ON OUR KNEES EVERYDAY THANKING GOD FOR THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST!

## JOB 15:1—17:16

Eliphaz attacked Job's attitude! He alleges that Job's words were ungodly, and his foolhardiness and irrationality would undermine the foundation of all "fear of, and devotion to, the Lord" (15:3-4). Job's attacks upon God and the wisdom of the ancients is evidence to Eliphaz proving Job has "gone off his rocker." Eliphaz doesn't comprehend that he, himself, is committing the fallacy of arguing in a circle—in 15:5 he argues that Job's language and attitude are the result of his guilt, and in 15:6 he argues that Job's guilt is proved by his language. Eliphaz believed that only a person who was inspired by deep evil within his soul could speak in the manner of Job. Job had chosen to use the language of the "crafty." **JOB WAS HURTING AND IN WAYS BESIDES PHYSICAL! HE WAS "HURTING" TO KNOW WHY!** True, Job used language for which many would chastize him—but those who would be critical need to search their own consciences and memories! Have we not all at least "thought" the same things Job thought—whether we uttered them or not? Have we not all been "upset" with God because he does not give us an immediate, undeniable, personal answer to the confounding experiences of this life? And, on second thought, do the words Job uttered in this book undermine your "fear and devotion" to the Lord? **APPARENTLY, GOD KNEW THAT WHAT JOB SAID WOULD BE NECESSARY TO THE SPIRITUAL MATURATION OF ALL BELIEVERS SINCE HE HAD THEM INCLUDED IN HIS BOOK—THE BIBLE!** Not only so, God approved of Job's "patience" ("steadfastness" RSV), Ezekiel 15:14-16; James 5:11. It is possible, of course, for our words and attitudes and actions to undermine the piety of others if they are insincere, blasphemous, and wicked. But Job's were not in any of these categories.

Eliphaz makes claim in these verses (15:7-19) that the "wisdom" he and the other "friends" are speaking to Job are from God and have been vindicated by the fact that they have been handed down as the traditions of the "fathers." James Strauss writes, "Eliphaz's provincialism shines forth in his belief that the purest wisdom is that in the possession of his own people. Remember, he is not a member of the covenant nation." He alleges that Job has disregarded all this "wisdom" of the sages and thus Job's weltanschauung ("world-view" or "philosophy of life") is corrupt and misguided because Job "limits wisdom to himself" (15:7-13). **THAT IS PATENTLY UNTRUE! JOB HAS MADE REFERENCE MANY TIMES TO THE "WORD" OF GOD AND THE WISDOM OF THE FATHERS!** Job has given evidence that his weltanschauung is based on what was commonly known from both creation and the "wisdom of the fathers." Job claims that he knows God as well as any of his friends. What Job wanted to "know" was **WHY?** **CHRISTIANS SHOULD THANK GOD EVERY DAY THAT THEY HAVE THE FINAL REVELATION OF GOD FOR THIS LIFE UPON WHICH TO BASE THEIR WELTANSCHAUUNG ("WORLD-VIEW").** Christians have **ALL** that God is ever going to give, this side of eternity, upon which to base their "world-view." The New Testament (along with the Old) is God's "faith" (i.e., doctrine) that has been once for all delivered unto the saints (Jude 3). There isn't going to be any further revelations from God upon which humankind may base its "world-view." **THIS IS IT! IT IS PERFECT FOR ALL THAT PERTAINS TO LIFE AND GODLINESS** (see 2 Pet. 1:3-11).

Eliphaz's "world-view" tells him first that Job's severe suffering is because he has defied God. Second, Job has lost all his worldly goods because he is guilty of self-indulgence. Third, Job had done something to come under the curse of God. And finally, Job is going to suffer the fires of the next life because of his sins. **THIS IS THE THEOLOGY OF ELIPHAZ!** It is the "live righteous, become wealthy" theology or "live wicked, suffer punishment and poverty" theology. There seems to be no provision for divine grace in Eliphaz's theology (much like that of Islam)! That is not what the New Testament teaches! Jesus came into the world and was perfectly righteous but was poor, remained poor, and suffered all sorts of pain (physical and psychological). At the same time, many of the Pharisees, Sadducees, Herods, and Caesars were wicked but were rich, remained rich, and died natural deaths without suffering much pain at all! Jesus' disciples and apostles were righteous, but were poor and suffered greatly for the faith! "So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, because we look not to the things that are seen, but to the things that are unseen, for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are not seen are eternal." (2 Cor. 4:16-18). Or, as Paul said to the Romans, "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us." (Rom. 8:18). The New Testament teaches that "suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character" (Rom. 5:3). **THESE SCRIPTURES ARE THE "KERNEL" OF THE CHRISTIAN WORLD-VIEW!**

Job longs for human sympathy from his friends. But he will not compromise his conviction that he is innocent of any wrong which would merit such affliction as he was experiencing. The speeches of his friends have made him weary with their monotony. They keep repeating the refrain that his affliction is evidence that he is hiding some secret sin. Job plainly asserts that if their positions were reversed, he would be able to speak as they do. He could "join words together" and make them as unmerciful as they. In fact, he says, if he were in their position he could do better than they because he had demonstrated in the past that he had the ability to strengthen people with his words (Job 4:4). Job tells Eliphaz he would not do to his friends as they were doing to him (16:4-5). **CHRISTIANS MUST BE CAREFUL THAT THEY "LET THEIR SPEECH ALWAYS BE GRACIOUS, SEASONED WITH SALT, SO THAT THEY MAY KNOW HOW THEY OUGHT TO ANSWER EVER ONE"** (Col. 4:6; Eph. 4:29; 1 Pet. 3:15). If we can't say something edifying, something that blesses, something that comforts and empathizes, we ought not to say anything at all! Ephesians ch.4 & 5 have a great deal to say about our speech. So does the book of Proverbs!

Job says God has delivered him to the ungodly (in Hebrew it is the word 'awil, "young boys")—a sarcastic denial of the status of his friends as wise men because of their age. **THEY ARE LIKE YOUNG, ARROGANT, "KNOW-IT-ALL BRATS."** They have no compassion for Job's severe affliction—no sympathy for him! Job is feeling: (a) his isolation from all humankind (16:7-11); (b) what he thinks is the brutality of God (16:12-14); (c) the psychological humiliation of being accused of wickedness when he knows he has not been. **SO, JOB FEELS LIKE GOD HAS FORSAKEN HIM INTO THE HANDS OF THOSE WHO HATE HIM!** What Job was feeling is what most people who suffer as much as he! **WE MUST ADMIT, THAT WHEN SUCH SUFFERING COMES TO US, WE ARE TEMPTED TO FEEL FORSAKEN BY GOD AND HEAVEN!** No one

ever said it would be easy to believe that God has our BEST interests at heart when he allows us to be tested, tried, and to suffer! Even Jesus cried out on the cross, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” The apostle Paul, in Asia, felt “utterly, unbearably crushed and despaired of life itself” (2 Cor. 1:8). C. S. Lewis said in his book, *The Problem of Pain*, “If I knew any way of escape (pain) I would crawl through sewers to find it. But what is the good of telling you about my feelings? You know them already: they are the same as yours. I am not arguing that pain is not painful. Pain hurts. That is what the word means. I am only trying to show that the old Christian doctrine of being made ‘perfect through suffering’ is not incredible. To prove it palatable is beyond my design.” Job will learn that God has not forsaken him! God is “able to do far more abundantly than all that Job could ask or think” (Eph. 3:20-21).

Job knows that his relationships with his fellow man were godly. Job knows that his relationship with God was pure. HE HAS NOT GIVEN UP HIS BELIEF IN GOD....HE HAS NOT BLASPHEMED GOD....HE HAS, TO THIS POINT IN HIS LIFE, ALWAYS BEEN COMPASSIONATE TOWARD PEOPLE AND WORSHIPFUL TOWARD GOD! He does not believe that he is sinless—but he does know that he is not guilty of trying to hide some egregious sin that would have prompted God to bring such suffering upon him! Job has said some words that might shock some people—but if we are all honest we will admit that we have at times “thought” that God has not been fair with us. We have tried to offer prayers and found we could not find the words to express what we REALLY feel, deep down in the recesses of our personal, private, heart! Thank God that we Christians have the intercession of the Holy Spirit of God to pray to God for us when we do not know how to pray as we ought (Rom. 8:26-27). We might as well be honest with God because he knows our hearts and our thoughts. We cannot hide from him or keep secrets from him! God does not permit “spinning” the truth! God will not condemn us for questioning him—only for disbelieving in him!

Job is asking for something beyond human comprehension—that God would have to “pledge” himself to be true to his word. David asked the same thing (Psa. 119:122). Job is asking God to be his defender (advocate) as well as his judge. Job felt he had to ask God to be his advocate (defense lawyer) because there was no one else who would stand up and defend him. Job literally asks, “Who is there who will strike hands with me?” Striking hands (handshake) was a practice for ratifying an agreement or business transaction. Job pleads with God to “stand up” for him because the hearts of his three “friends” and all others have been blinded by prejudice and bias. They cannot make a true and fair evaluation of Job’s argument that he is not the terrible sinner they have prejudged him to be. ONLY GOD CAN SPEAK THE TRUTH ABOUT JOB. Job has not renounced God—far from it—he has “rested his case” into the hands of God for vindication. Job was so disgusted with his friends that he accused them of turning against him in order to seize some of his property (17:5). Job believes that all humanity has prejudged him to be harboring some terrible secret sin because of his wretched condition. Little did Job know that this is exactly what God would do for all those who would accept it—God would become a “pledge” himself for sinners! This is precisely the meaning of Hebrews 6:13-20. There it is said that God “interposed himself” RSV, “confirmed himself” NIV (Greek *emesiteusen*, “mediated himself”—the Greek verb is in the middle voice meaning the action done was upon the actor) with an oath (Heb. 6:17). That this is correct is confirmed by 2 Cor. 1:20—“For all the promises

of God find their Yes (Greek, amen, “so be it”) in him (Christ),” Jesus Christ was the final, complete, perfect Divine “pledge” or “oath” that God keeps ALL his promises. No surer “pledge” could be give in history for all mankind to know and trust than the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Cor. 15:58). God, incarnate in Jesus Christ, became our “advocate” (1 John 2:1, Greek parakleton, “one called along side to mediate”).

Job accuses his “friends” of holding out false hopes to him. They turned Job’s “night” (darkness) into “day” falsely. They had no real “wisdom” although they claimed to have it. If they try to renew their attempts to solve his problem, they will fail as surely as they have already failed. Urging him to confess his “secret sin” they had promised that his life would be “brighter than the noonday, and his darkness like the morning” (Job 11:17). BUT STILL THE “MIDNIGHT OF AFFLICTION” WAS UPON HIM AND HE HAD HEARD NO “BRILLIANT” EXPLANATIONS OR REASONS FOR IT! Job was being a realist. He was viewing his days on earth as already past, his life with all its cherished purposes cut off. He has not been allowed to live long enough to fulfill the aspirations of his heart (17:11-12). All that was left for him by way of release from his suffering was Sheol (death) and he found little solace in that! JOB HAS REACHED THE “END OF HIS ROPE”—EXACTLY WHERE GOD WANTED HIM! Christian friends, and even Christian relatives, are of little assistance when we have reached “the end of our rope.” Job was, however, remembering his Creator “before the silver cord was snapped, or the golden bowl was broken” (Eccl. 12:1-8). That was about all that was left for him to do—he could not find an answer to his perplexity—nor could his friends—nor could his wife. IT ALL SEEMED LIKE “VANITY” TO HIM—JUST AS SOLOMON SAYS SO OFTEN IN ECCLESIASTES! But the Christian can be steadfast, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as he knows his/her labor is not in vain in the Lord, 1 Cor. 15:58, because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and his promise to raise those who believe in him from the dead! Christians know that to be absent from the body is to be at “home” with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:1ff), and that to die and be with Christ is “very far better” (Phil. 1:23).

## JOB 18:1—19:20

Bildad is consciously keeping any feeling of compassion for Job sublimated. He attacks Job for his lack of appreciation for ancient wisdom, his abusive language. Bildad also implies that Job cannot expect to be exempted from the universal law (as Bildad sees it) that suffering is inevitably a punishment for some sin (open or hidden). God will not hold in abeyance for Job or anyone else his inexorable laws that govern the universe. God will not overturn the law that imputes wickedness to those who suffer (18:3-4). Job was not really expecting to be treated differently than any other human being! Job simply could not abide what these three friends kept insisting—that Job had committed some horrible sin for him to be suffering so severely! In Job’s mind God had another inexorable law and that was that “righteous” people did not suffer but prospered—AND JOB WAS SURE THAT HE WAS SUFFICIENTLY RIGHTEOUS THAT HE SHOULD NOT BE SUFFERING SO! That’s the rub! Neither Job, nor his friends, should be dictating to God what his inexorable laws are! GOD IS NOT TO BE CONTAINED WITHIN THE PARADIGM OF HUMAN SPECULATION OR EXPERIENCE—GOD OPERATES “OUTSIDE THE BOX” OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE, AND EVEN OUTSIDE HIS VERBAL REVELATION WHENEVER HE SEES FIT. God has some “secret things” (Deut. 29:29) which he keeps within his own purview and does not see fit to reveal. God’s thoughts are not our thoughts and his ways not our ways. His thoughts and ways are higher than ours (Isa. 55:8-9). Whatever God has seen fit that we should know for our salvation and sanctification, he has revealed in his word. Whatever he has not revealed we cannot know and must trust him when things come our way that we do not understand! WE HAVE PLENTY OF EVIDENCE THAT GOD IS WORTHY OF OUR COMPLETE TRUST!

Bildad has determined that Job had trapped himself (18:8-9). “Terrors frighten him on every side, and chase him at his heels” (18:11) indicates that Job was suffering excruciating psychological torture by not understanding why he, a righteous man, was suffering so! Job was evidently intellectually and emotionally confused and “beside himself” with agony in his soul! IT WASN’T RAGE THAT JOB WAS FEELING—HE WAS FEELING LIKE GOD HAD ABANDONED HIM—HE WAS FEELING CONFUSION, HURT, DEPRESSION—EVERYTHING THAT OTHER HUMAN BEINGS (EVEN CHRISTIANS) OFTEN FEEL WHEN UNDER SEVERE SUFFERING! It cannot be wrong to “feel” that way—even Jesus felt that way (Matt. 26:36-42; Luke 12:50; John 12:27). Paul felt that way (2 cor. 1:8-11)—so long as one does not renounce one’s faith in God (Heb. 5:7-9). Faith must override feelings! If human beings could understand everything about the universe, they would have no need for faith—they would become worshipers of themselves. Many arrogant scientists and philosophers today are humanists (i.e., worshipers of themselves and humanity in general) because they believe the human mind is capable of understanding every aspect of the universe including the human psyche—WRONG! Human beings have not conquered the ocean let alone limitless space. Human beings have not plumbed the depths of the human psyche, let alone the physical body (Jer. 17:9-10).

Ancient Semitic peoples (including Hebrews and Arabs) believed that every

man and woman should marry and that every married couple should produce children (especially male children, see Gen. 15:2; 30:1; 1 Sam. 1:11-20; Psa. 127:3; 128:3; Luke 1:7,28). Many children was be considered to be a great blessing from the Lord. In ancient times the agrarian culture and the demands of physical survival (sheep-herding, farming, and fishing) demanded much physical, hands-on labor . A large family with many male children was a necessity. Furthermore, those peoples put great emphasis on “passing-on” their “estates” to their children so that they, too, could provide for their families. Thus, they had to have male heirs. **IN SUCH SOCIETIES, BEING BARREN OR UNABLE TO SIRE CHILDREN WAS CONSIDERED A CURSE FROM GOD!** Bildad was certain that since Job’s children were all killed in the storm (Job 1:18-19) it was clear proof that God had cursed Job for some horrible sin—and that Job was remaining impenitent about his sin. Therefore, he would have no more children or heirs (18:19-21). If God approved of the idea that children are a blessing to the home—what must God think about some citizens of a nation (the USA) that allows over one million babies to be killed before they are ever born (abortion)?

Job **KNEW** something of God! Bildad is without an ounce of humility or compassion. **HE THINKS HE ALONE KNOWS GOD—AND IS MORE THAN WILLING TO TEACH JOB ABOUT GOD!** As we shall see at the end of this book, Bildad and his friends did not know God (Job 42:7-9). Job knew God well enough that he would not give up his faith in God! Job believed if only he could stand “face to face” with God he could talk to God about his extremities! Job knew enough about God’s standards of righteousness he believed he had met those standards. Job knew God well enough that he wasn’t afraid to plead his case and express his agonies to God—which is something his three friends did not know! How much do you know about God? **HOW BLEST WE SHOULD CONSIDER OURSELVES TO HAVE THE NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES.** Jesus said, “If we have seen him, we have seen the Father” (John 1:14; 12:45; 14:7-8; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3). Whatever Jesus is, God is! When Jesus was on earth “all the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in him bodily” (Col. 1:19; 2:9). The Holy Spirit of Christ dwells in us through the instrumentality of God’s word (John 6:63). We partake of his divine nature through believing and obeying his precious promises (2 Pet. 1:3-5). **YES! CHRISTIANS CAN KNOW GOD AS COMPLETELY AS POSSIBLE THIS SIDE OF HEAVEN BY SIMPLY BELIEVING AND DOING HIS WORD AS REVEALED (ESPECIALLY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES).** Even those who do not have God’s word can “know” him to some extent (Rom. 1:18-32; Psa. 19:1ff).

Job’s statement in 19:4 is hypothetical. Job is not admitting that he had the egregious sinfulness of which his “friends” were accusing him, but **IF** he had, it was not against his so-called “friends.” Job, of course, would never have thought of himself as sinless—perfectly righteous. He knew enough about God to know that no human being could make such an outrageous claim as to be perfect! **BUT JOB BELIEVED HE HAD NOT MERITED THE SCATHING ACCUSATIONS AND REBUKES HIS FRIENDS CHOSE TO HEAP UPON HIM!** Job believed he had not merited the extreme, excruciating, humiliating, tormenting suffering that God had put upon him! But no human being deserves to be served by God (his Master)—a human being should be grateful to serve his God. When we have done all we have been commanded we are still unworthy servants, for we have done only that which it was our duty to do (Luke 17:7-10). Yes! Whatever human beings receive from God it is by God’s grace! Even

“thorns in the flesh” may be borne by the sufficient grace of God (2 Cor. 12:7-10). Every sinner deserves the “second death” (eternal torments) for their sins. Only because God has offered gracious forgiveness through the vicarious death of his Son, Jesus Christ, are we able to escape what we deserve. We do well to admit and confess our sins and ask God’s forgiveness. If we say that we have no sin, we are liars (because we know we have) and the truth is not in us (1 John 1:10). **BUT WE DO NOT NEED TO CONFESS SINS WE HAVE NOT COMMITTED!** That is what Job’s friends were demanding of him! And Job is not going to lie to himself and to God and confess wickedness he has not committed. We have enough sin to confess (commission and omission) without confessing wickedness of which we are not guilty.

Yes! It is a shame to say it, but often times those who are extremely ill are shunned by those who could give them comfort and consolation—**JUST BY BEING WITH THEM—EVEN WITHOUT SPEAKING ANY WORDS!** People who are well do not like to visit hospitals and “senior-citizens” homes where the aged are plainly dying! It reminds them too vividly of their own mortality! Most us believe we have to say something, but we most often don’t know what to say! In America’s modern society we have relegated the care for the terminally ill and those who are incapable of caring for themselves to “professionals” we hire to care for them. I am old enough to remember my grandfather and grandmother (on my mother’s side) taking care of two of my grandfather’s spinster aunts who were deaf and mute and in addition, one was crippled and the other was blind. Grandma lived in a 4 room house with 7 children as they were taking care of these invalid relatives—they had no indoor plumbing, heating, or water. They lived on a farm. Grandma and grandpa and the children had to work, by hand, on their farm and also take care of these two invalid women who were in their 70s and 80s. A generation ago, that was how most invalid relatives were cared for—in the homes of children or other relatives. Job had only his wife, and she was not all that sympathetic about his terrible affliction (boils or some other putrid disease all over his skin). Job says, “Even young children despise me; when I rise they talk against me. All my intimate friends abhor me, and those who I loved have turned against me.” **NOW, DO YOU GET SOME SENSE OF JOB’S PREDICAMENT?** Is it any wonder why Job was “undone” about his affliction and complained as he did when his friends accused him of bringing it upon himself through some egregious sin??? When Job refused to renounce his faith that God would eventually vindicate him, it is no wonder that James would write in the NT, “Behold, we call those happy who were steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.” (James 5:11). How about you, dear Christian? “In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood” (Heb. 12:4). **COULD YOU HAVE REMAINED STEADFAST HAD YOU BEEN JOB?**

**OUT OF THE DEPTH OF DESPAIR, JOB UTTERS ONE OF THE GRANDEST STATEMENTS OF FAITH**

**IN THE OLD TESTAMENT (19:23-29).** Job is hoping in the certainty he has that God will one day “shatter his silence” and Job will be vindicated and the most significant part of his suffering (the suffering in his soul) will be resolved. James Strauss notes, “how Job’s friends have appealed to the wisdom of the past, how Job is enduring the present, and that only the future holds the solution to his dilemma.” That, in a “nut-

shell” is the Christian view of this world in the NT—the future existence (e.g., Rom. 8:18-25; 2 Cor. 4:16-18; 5:1-15; Phil. 1:21-23). Job wants his claims to innocence to be inscribed even in the rock so they may be there when his Redeemer finally stands upon the earth” so God will vindicate him. Job 19:25 is the central verse of the entire book. Job knows that there is no power within man or nature that can meet his needs. The ultimate answer to evil, suffering, and death comes in this preeminent text of the book of Job (19:25-27)! **GOD IS ON OUR SIDE! AND GOD HAS COME AND STOOD ON THE EARTH AND “BY HIS STRIPES WE ARE HEALED (FORGIVEN).”** We can take ultimate solace in the **FACT** of the conquest of sin and death in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We can say with the apostle Paul, “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!...There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus....If God be for us, who is against us?...Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies; who is to condemn,” etc. (Rom. 7 & 8). **NOT ANYTHING...IN ALL CREATION WILL BE ABLE TO SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD!**

Job is not threatening to wield the “sword” himself. He would have made some effort toward violence long before this had that been his intention. Job undoubtedly had other “friends” he could have called upon to do violence upon these three persecutors of his. Job is warning his “friends” that if they persist in “pursuing” him and accusing him of having the “root of the matter” within his own secret life, the wrath of God will strike them anon. Job believes his “friends” are going to come under the “judgment” of God for their lack of compassion and refusal to believe him when he claims innocence of their accusations! Job is doing what every faithful believer in God should do—he is not going to retaliate personally—he is going to leave the judgment upon his accusers to the Lord or such human authorities as the Lord ordains to execute his divine wrath on wrong doers (see Rom. 12:14—13:7). Christians have a Biblical mandate to refrain from personal retaliation (see Matt. 5:38-41; 1 Cor. 6:1-8). When Christians have conflicts with other Christians they are to go to the elders of the congregation to have it settled and not to heathen courts. When Christians have conflicts with non-Christians, they may avail themselves of every legal right afforded them under the laws of their courts (unless the laws of their courts violate the word of God). **BUT THERE MUST BE NO PERSONAL VENDETTAS INSTITUTED BY CHRISTIANS!** Job is acting more like a Christian than some Christians of the 21st century!

## JOB 20:1—26:14

The wicked do not always get their “just deserts” in this life! History has recorded that many wicked, greedy, violent, God-cursing people have lived “full” lives, died at a very old age, without suffering much physical pain or loss. On the other hand, history is filled with the suffering and agonizingly slow death, or the sudden, violent, tragic death of many Christian young people (let alone all the innocent babies who die in wars and famines and plagues). Zophar’s theology does not match with reality! Even the Bible is filled with contradictions to Zophar’s theology that the “exulting of the wicked is short.” Furthermore, monuments, corporations, estates, statues and all sorts of “remembrances” of some of the deceased and living wicked clutter the landscape. Reality is that the wicked live long and prosper, the poor are afflicted and exploited by the wicked and some die young, That was Job’s dilemma—and it has been the dilemma of mankind ever since the Garden of Eden. Why, for example, did Abel have to be murdered as a young man, while his murderer, Cain, lived on after him in a full and prosperous life? THIS REALITY CONTINUES TO PLAGUE MANKIND FOR THE PROPER ANSWER! And the answer can only be found through divine revelation (the Bible). The answer is demonstrated to Job in a physical way at the end of this book. GOD IS ABLE, AND WILL, EVENTUALLY REWARD STEADFAST FAITH WITH AN ABUNDANCE (SPIRITUALLY) BEYOND ALL COMPARISON (Luke 22: 28-30; 23:43; Rom. 5:2; 8:18; 2 Cor. 4:16-18; Col. 1:27; 3:4; Titus 2:13; 1 Pet. 4:13; 5:1; 1 John 3:2). The wicked will receive their “just deserts” at the 2nd coming of Christ and the great judgment day (Matt. 25:46; Luke 16:19-31; 2 Thess. 1:5-10; Rev. 14:9-11) and the “torment” will be infinite—beyond any affliction ever suffered by anyone in this world!

Job is a realist—he knows Zophar has his head in the sand about the wicked perishing. Zophar was only theorizing about the terrible judgments that come upon the wicked in order to try to prove that Job’s affliction must have come upon him because Job had some secret wickedness! Job wants Zophar to know that he, Job, has been a righteous man who is suffering as Zophar theorizes the wicked are supposed to suffer. Job uses six realities to refute Zophar’s harangue: (a) the children and grandchildren of the wicked grow up before their eyes, while Job has lost his children (21:8); (b) all the cattle of the wicked breed and give birth without trouble and the wicked prosper (21:10) while Job has lost all his herds; (c) the wicked live out their lives in peace and die quietly without suffering (21:13) while Job is undergoing excruciating suffering; (d) some wicked men stay healthy and until the day they die—they die happy and at ease and their bodies are well-nourished (21:23) while Job thinks he is going to die in physical torment; (e) all mankind dies (wicked and righteous alike) and are covered with worms (21:26); (f) on the day when God is angry and punishes, it is the wicked man who is always spared and no one comes to accuse a wicked man (21:30) while Job is being punished and his “friends” are all present to “accuse” him. Job’s “reality check” for Zophar is the way life has always been in this world since the “Fall” in Eden. It was there (Gen. 3:10-19; Rom. 8:19-23) that God “cursed the earth” for man’s sake (i.e., to discipline and chasten mankind so as to turn mankind back to rely on God). The whole creation groans and travails awaiting redemption from its subjection to futility and bondage of decay (Rom. 8:18-25). It is not going to change until God destroys this “created order”

and makes a new heaven and earth in which righteousness dwells (2 Pet. 3:8-13). THAT IS REALITY AND THE BIBLE BIDS ALL MANKIND TO FACE UP TO IT AND REPENT AND LONG FOR THE NEXT LIFE!

There are four specific sins which Eliphaz accuses Job of committing and refusing to admit: (a) taking all of a brother's clothing and leaving him naked in repayment of a debt (22:6); (b) refusing water and food to travelers who were tired, thirst, and hungry (22:7); (c) using his power and position to take over the whole land (22:8); (d) refusal to help widows and robbing and mistreating orphans (22:9). HOW LOW CAN A HUMAN BEING GET, SAYS ELIPHAZ! According to Eliphaz, Job would be guilty of murder by "remote control" since Eliphaz believes Job is guilty of these sins! That is why, according to Eliphaz, Job is surrounded by the snares and terrors of God and finds himself in darkness, overwhelmed by a flood of affliction (22:10-11). Eliphaz has the reason for Job's situation all wrapped up! Either Job is lying or Eliphaz doesn't know what he's talking about because Job has said that if he had erred his "error remained with himself" (i.e., 19:4). Job denies that he has ever committed such sins against others as Eliphaz accuses him here. Job later declares to God that he is innocent of the specific crimes which Eliphaz accuses him here (31:16-40). Remember, God himself declared, not once, but twice, there was none like Job upon the earth—"a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil" (Job 1:8). ELIPHAZ WAS WRONG! WHILE JOB WAS NOT WITHOUT SIN, HE WAS NOT GUILTY OF THE SINS OF WHICH ELIPHAZ ACCUSED HIM! That frequently happens to "righteous" (i.e., Christians) people. Often those who maintain any semblance of "righteousness" or Biblical values are accused of sins they do not commit. In fact they are most often found to be doing what others accuse them of not doing, and not doing what others accuse them of doing! Any Christian in the public eye is going to be wrongfully accused by those who disregard what the Bible says think they know what is right.

Eliphaz accuses Job of being a terrible sinner like those of "the old way" who "were snatched away before their time; their foundation was washed away" (22:15-16), i.e., Job is being accused of being as evil as those who were all drowned in the great Flood of Noah's day! On the other hand, says Eliphaz, everyone knows that those who repent of wickedness will receive prosperity from God in this life (22:21-30). In what Eliphaz says in these verses is correct to a degree—it is even so taught in the New Testament! God "hears" to respond with grace only to those who repent of their sins and pray to him. However, the New Testament does not teach that the "righteous" and penitent will always prosper materially or physically! Case in point, the apostles—Paul claimed they had become (because of their Christian faith) "the refuse of the world, the off-scouring (i.e., garbage) of the world" (1 Cor. 4:13). The Hebrew-Christians of the 1st century "endured hard struggles with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to abuse and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated—and joyfully accepted the plundering of their property" (Heb. 10:32-34). NO! Christians should not expect to be always materially and physically prosperous because they are "righteous." No human being can ever earn a payment of worldly goods or even physical well-being in return for righteousness. THAT WAS WHAT TORMENTED JOB'S MIND—HE HAD "BOUGHT INTO" THE WORLD-VIEW THAT A "RIGHTEOUS MAN" DESERVED BETTER FROM GOD THAN HE WAS HAVING IN ALL HIS AFFLICTION AND LOSS!

Often the motive of those who wrongfully accuse the “righteous” is to make themselves seem “righteous.” Such people “measure themselves by one another, and compare themselves with one another—they are without understanding” (2 Cor. 10:12).

Job (23:1-17) has the same feeling as Lettie J. Kirkpatrick who wrote about her suffering in *The Lookout*, November 10, 2002, article entitled, “Forsaken—Finding Faith Beyond Feeling.” “It has been called the dark night of the soul, a wilderness walk, a season of drought. The symptoms are the same. God seems distant, unapproachable silent. A separation exists, blocking the awareness of God’s presence and fellowship. In *A Grief Observed* (HarperCollins, 2001), C. S. Lewis gave this description of his experience: ‘Meanwhile, where is God?...Go to him when your need is desperate...and what do you find? A door slammed in your face, and a sound of bolting and double bolting on the inside. After that, silence.’ My personal journey into barrenness began with the death of my teenage daughter, which was quickly followed by the loss of my dad and grandmother. On the heels of those blows, my husband had a heart attack. All this in eight months! Excerpts from my prayer journal reveal my struggle: ‘I will remember these days as days of alternating numbness, despair, confusion, and searching....You (God) have chosen not to overwhelm me with your presence in my grieving. I have no glimmer of what you are doing—I feel lonely, angry, isolated, empty, and despairing.’” Ms. Kirkpatrick continues, “Still, I discovered places God can be found even when he does not seem to be with us.” She “found” God in His Word; in Prayer, in Circumstances (the comfort of other people), in His Power. Yet, Job uses four aspects of his character to assert God would declare him innocent if he could argue his case against the accusations of his friends—they are: (a) he is honest (23:7); (b) God knows every step he takes and Job claims he is pure before God (23:10); (c) Job follows faithfully the road God chooses, and never wanders to either side (23:11); (d) Job trembles with fear before God (23:14). GOD IS THERE (as Francis Schaeffer so eloquently puts it in his book, *The God Who Is There!*—and God is not silent. He has spoken fully, completely, and finally about such matters as plagued Job’s soul in his Son, Jesus Christ, and in his New Testament scriptures.

There are actually four things Job observes of God in relation to the wicked: (a) God demonstrates he is in control of the world when he “sets a time of judgment” for the wicked (24:1); (b) God ignores the prayers of the wicked (24:12); (c) God makes it so that no one remembers the vanished wicked ones (24:20); (d) God continues to “destroy the mighty...and the wicked” (24:22). Job knows all that his three “friends” have been saying about the wicked. They do not need to keep repeating, and repeating, and repeating it! What Job wants from them is some sympathy and encouragement that God will eventually vindicate his righteousness. But Job is contrasting the “wicked” with himself in defense against the accusations of his friends. He is saying, “I am not like the wicked as I am describing them.!” WHY CAN’T HIS FRIENDS ACKNOWLEDGE THAT JOB WAS NOT LIKE THAT BEFORE THIS SUDDEN CALAMITY CAME UPON HIM? Job is trying to prove that before his affliction, he was not at all like the wicked. But Job is fighting a losing cause with his “friends”—that is until God speaks up and condemns them for their “unrighteous” attitudes toward Job.

Bildad’s attitude may be summed up in two phrases: (a) man cannot argue with

God (25:1-4); (b) man is not pure before God (25:5-6). To Bildad the smallness of man is symbolic of his worthlessness. No man should have the brashness to assert his innocence before God. Certainly no “worm” should argue about God’s integrity by seeking self-vindication. Man is only fit to be compared to a maggot (Job 7:5; 17:14; 21:26) or to a “worm” (Psa. 22:6; isa. 14:11; 41:14). Bildad, like Eliphaz, is a forerunner of Islamic monotheism, which ignores the facts of good and evil, the nature of God being only power, and man’s moral integrity before his holy God unless man earns his integrity by good works! Bildad is correct, in the ultimate sense. Man cannot “argue” his own case before God and expect to win because man is not pure before God. Man is a sinner condemned by a perfectly holy and righteous God (Rom. 3:9-20). Human beings are without excuse for their sin because the righteousness of God has been revealed from heaven and may be plainly seen in the things that have been made (Rom. 1:18-23). Even our own human conscience condemns us (Rom. 2:12-16). Man needs a Perfect Man to argue mankind’s case before God. That Perfect Man is Jesus Christ who is our “argue-er” or mediator before God. Jesus Christ pleads our case because he has conquered sin in the flesh for us (Rom. 3:21-26; 8:3-4) and is acceptable to God to sanctify all men who trust in him (Heb. 2:5-18) and therefore is fit to be our “high priest” (Heb. 4:14-16; 5:1-14; 7:1-28). **BUT BILDAD IS NOT CORRECT TO INFER THAT GOD HAS NO CONCERN OR COMPASSION OR MERCY FOR “MAN, THE MAGGOT!”** God’s attitude toward man is to extend to him **MERCY and FORGIVENESS, and GRACE, and SALVATION, and SANCTIFICATION, and RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD TO GLORY IN CHRIST!**

Bildad’s brief speech had been no help to Job in his misery—no comfort at all. Why didn’t Bildad try to offer some help to Job? Second, Bildad spoke no “wisdom” to Job that Job did not already know. If Job was so ignorant, why didn’t Bildad give Job some real insight into the nature of the merciful God? Third, Bildad was offering “words of wisdom” to Job who was wiser than Bildad! Bildad had not even spoken the wisdom of the ancient ones—he had spoken out of his own wisdom which, because of his youthfulness, was not even as widely experienced as that of Job. The best help a young Christian, or any other Christian for that matter, can give to one suffering as Job was is to remain silent and listen—or at least offer words of God of comfort, grace and promise directly from the Scriptures! **ALL JOB WANTED WAS SOME ENCOURAGEMENT FROM A DIVINE SOURCE....BUT HIS THREE “FRIENDS” COULD GIVE HIM NONE!** I will always remember what my preacher B. A. Austin, at College Heights Christian Church, once said in a sermon about his method of “counseling.” He almost always listened to the “counselee’s” story, then pointed out as many scriptures as he could which dealt with their problem, then said, “This is what God says about your problem and his answer—now go do it!” **COUNSELING BASED ON HUMANISTIC CONTRADICTIONS IS OF NO VALUE WHATSOEVER TO ANY ONE WHO IS TROUBLED. NO COUNSELING AT ALL WOULD BE BETTER THAN THAT!**

## JOB 27:1—31:40

Job swears the following things to God: (a) his lips will never say anything evil nor will he speak a lie; (b) he will never say that his human “friends” are right; (c) he will never give up his claim to be innocent; (d) he will teach how great is God’s power and explain what almighty God has planned. These four things Job “swears by the God who has taken away his right (vindication) and vexed his soul” (27:1-2). Job would not “swear by God” frivolously! He means every word he “swears” to. Job is “swearing” that he speaks in sincerity when he affirms his innocence of the sins of which his “friends” are accusing him! Notice: Job still believes in God because he swears by him; but he also thinks God has done him an injustice! Job will learn later that all along God was preparing to vindicate him, and to bless him much more than he had before! Job’s “heart” (i.e., conscience) does not “reproach” (condemn) him. WHO AMONG US COULD EVER SAY THAT? PERHAPS JOB HAS GONE TOO FAR! It is nearly impossible for any human being to claim an absolutely clear conscience! Job has consistently proclaimed an innocent conscience to Eliphaz (6:10,29,30; 16:17; 23:10-12); to Bildad (9:35; 10:7); and to Zophar (12:4; 13:18-19). Job claims that all along he has spoken the truth and is not about to allow his “friends” the right to assert his guilt. After swearing to God, Job proceeds to “teach” his “friends” (enemies, 27:7) just what is in store for those who do wickedness! Job is subtly telling his “friends” that he knows how the “wicked” behave, and that his “friends” are dangerously close to being counted among the “wicked.” YOU KNOW, OF COURSE, IN THE BIBLE ALL MANKIND IS DIVIDED INTO TWO CATEGORIES—THE LOST AND THE SAVED, THE WIFE AND THE FOOLISH, THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS, THE WICKED AND THE RIGHTEOUS. THERE’S NO IN BETWEEN—JOB’S FRIENDS NEEDED TO ALIGN THEMSELVES VERBALLY AND IN THEIR HEARTS WITH THE TRUTH ABOUT JOB’S CHARACTER LEST THEY BE FOUND AMONG THE “WICKED.” This is as true today as it was 2000 years ago. Those who “bad-mouth” and “slander” God’s “righteous” ones who are “in Christ” are “wicked” regardless of how well behaved they may be!

Job declares in this speech that the “wisdom” he needs cannot be dug from the earth as one would precious metals in a mine! In spite all the human expertise in tracing the handiwork of God in the universe, Job says he (and other humans) cannot find the “wisdom” that he needs to explain why he, the righteous man, is suffering such terrible affliction. Furthermore, the wisdom one needs to fathom the reasons for human suffering (especially for the righteous) cannot be purchased—no matter how rich one may be. Not even Bill Gates with his billions has enough money to purchase this wisdom. Human redemption, sanctification, and ultimately, glorification is the reason for human suffering! BUT THAT WAS NOT REVEALED UNTIL JESUS CHRIST, THE PERFECT HUMAN, CAME TO EARTH AND SUFFERED VICARIOUSLY FOR ALL SIN! The apostle Paul is quite correct when he says that the source of the “wisdom of God” is in Christ Jesus (1 Cor. 1:18-31). He is also correct when he says Christ is the “assured understanding and the knowledge of God’s mystery...in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Isa. 11:2; Col. 2:2-3; Rom. 11:33). All the Christian needs to know about suffering is in the New Testament scriptures. Beyond that, God will tell us “bye and bye” or as the old Gospel song goes, “Farther along, we’ll know all about it, farther along, we’ll understand why. Cheer up my brother, live in the sunshine, we’ll understand it, all bye and bye.”

Job has it right! Job concludes that ultimate wisdom is found “in the fear of the Lord.” This is not a cringing, paralyzing fear. The “fear of God” is the “awe or reverence” of God’s majesty, omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence which he deserves. It is the same kind of “wisdom” spoken of so eloquently in Psalms, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes! Reverent submission to the gracious, revealed, will of God is the only place in the universe where one gains hope of ultimate victory over sin, evil and suffering! It is the wisdom delivered to the earth in the birth, life, death and resurrection of the Perfect Man, Jesus Christ! The “wisdom of God” was spoken to mankind in the “words” of the apostles (1 Cor. 2:6-13). God, in Christ, has made known to us all wisdom and insight into the mystery of his will (Eph. 1:9)—that we should be holy and blameless before him. We can be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding (Col. 1:9) and thus lead a life worthy of the Lord; fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. If the word of Christ dwells in us we can teach and admonish one another in all wisdom (Col. 3:16). Christ is who we proclaim, teaching and warning every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man mature in Christ (Col. 1:27-28). The wisdom of this world is folly (1 Cor. 3:19) when compared with the wisdom that is found in the word of Christ! LET US “MINE” THE DEPTH OF THE RICHES AND WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE OF GOD (Rom. 11:33) BY KNOWING AND DOING THE WORDS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES!

Job’s day-dreams of a happier time in his life. For just a moment, the terrible realities of his affliction are forgotten, as he reminisces of the times when he was prosperous, healthy, respected, and had heirs. He is almost enraptured in nostalgia of years gone by! He remembers that he was a “righteous,” compassionate, God-fearing man. He had his future all planned out—he would prosper and gain even more honor and respect. Never, in his wildest imagination, could he envision himself sitting on a “dung heap,” throwing ashes over his head, in excruciating pain, having lost all his worldly goods and family (except his wife), be despised by everyone who passed by him, and psychologically tortured by his so-called “friends” who brazenly accused him of some egregious, secret sin! He day-dreamed of the “good old days” when God was in his heaven and everything was right with the world! Job got his “affliction” in mid-life. Most of us get ours in the so-called “golden years” or “senior years” of our few remaining days on earth. Most of us expect some sort of physical suffering in old age. We learn from experience that this is the way life and death come to most of us! BUT WE ALL STILL REMINISCE ABOUT THE “GOOD OLD DAYS” WHEN WE WERE YOUNG AND COULD “DO” ALMOST ANYTHING WE WISHED, GO ALMOST ANYWHERE WE WISHED. We did not think much about mortality in mid-life. Some of us kept the idea of dying sublimated and just thought we would go on forever in this physical body—doing and going as we always have! Sooner or later, death catches up with us all! Thank God, because of Jesus Christ, “here indeed we groan, and long to put on our heavenly dwelling, so that by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we sigh with anxiety; not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life....so we are always of good courage; we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. We are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.” (2 Cor. 5:2-8). JOB HAD AN “INKLING” OF THIS “AFTER-LIFE” BUT NOTHING AT ALL LIKE WE HAVE IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST!

No. Job is merely contrasting his life as it is now, with all the affliction and humiliation and frustration he is suffering with the peace, tranquility and esteem he enjoyed before God allowed all this to befall him! WE ALL DO IT! As we said in the previous answer (to question #4), we all come to the point in life where we reminisce about the “good old days” and compare them with the “bad nowadays” we are going through. The past is always “brighter” than the present! If this life were all the life we would ever have, we would spend most of our time day-dreaming about the past. BECAUSE WE SEEM TO EASILY FORGET HOW MANY “CRISES” AND “TROUBLES” WE HAVE ALREADY EXPERIENCED IN LIFE! Perhaps there are some people who “feed” on being miserable. Job didn’t! He longed for another day, a future day, when God would make his life like the past. As he was under his affliction, humiliation and frustration he needed to “vent” his soul to God and to anyone else who would have the compassion to listen and sympathize. He was pouring out the deepest, most secret, recesses of his soul and spirit. He has come to the place where words almost fail him to tell of how much he is suffering, physically and mentally. Christians have the blessed promise of God that when words fail us, the Holy Spirit of God “helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words.” (Rom. 8:26). No other religion on earth makes that claim! Every other religion (Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, etc.) insists that man must find the wisdom and words necessary to appease God and earn an audience with God by eloquence or magnitude of prayers!

It would be difficult for any believer (Christian) today to claim a righteousness as thorough as Job claims! In ancient Israelite legal procedure the oath of innocence repudiating an accusation was of crucial importance. Where clear evidence was lacking, an oath was taken as proof of the innocence of the accused. So, the swearing of such an oath was a solemn civil and religious action which called upon God to pronounce the verdict (usually expecting some “curse” from God if the oath-taker was lying). If no calamity befell the oath-taker, it was accepted as Divine vindication of innocence. Job seeks to call upon God to restore him from his affliction to show his friends that he is innocent of their charges. First, Job says he is not guilty of sensual sin (31:1-4; 31:9-12). He claims innocence even of illicit sexual desire. That is ethical purity of the highest order (See Matt. 5:28; 18:8). Second, Job says he is not guilty of any lying (31:5-8). Most of us could never say that. Third, Job claims to be innocent of abusing any one subordinate to him (31:13-15). Fourth, Job claims to be innocent of disregarding the plight of the poor and not offering help (31:16-23). Fifth, Job pleads he is not guilty of coveting riches or putting his trust in them (31:24-25). Sixth, Job swears he is not guilty of any kind of idolatry (31:26-28). Seventh, Job swears he is not guilty of hatred for his enemies (31:29-32). Eighth, Job swears he is not guilty of concealing any sin he may have committed—he was open and confessed his errors. NOW WHO AMONG US WOULD BE WILLING TO SWEAR AN OATH TO GOD TO SUCH GREAT SPIRITUAL INNOCENCE (EXPECTING GOD TO PUNISH US IF WE WERE WRONG)? Remember, God has already stated Job’s righteous integrity to the devil in chapters 1 and 2. If Job had a serious sin, it was probably that he was too self-righteous! BUT GOD IS FIXING THAT WITH THE AFFLICTION AND SILENCE!. Clearly, Job’s life would be one for any God-fearing, believing Christian to emulate! It contains the essence of what Jesus taught in the Gospels.

Job knows his “friends” are not listening to his claims for innocence. They have already decided that he is a guilty, secret, sinner of some egregious sin since such terrible calamity has come upon him. They have, in essence, said to Job, “Don’t confuse me with the facts, our minds are made up—you are guilty of some terrible sin—come on, now, confess it!” Job metaphorically “puts his signature” on his oath (31:35). “Signed, sealed, and delivered!” I AM NOT GUILTY OF ANY SIN THAT SHOULD BRING SUCH CALAMITY UPON ME! He even pleads with God (“his adversary”) to speak out, or write down, the “indictment” against him, and he will “give an account of all his steps” and would approach God as a “prince.” As we said earlier, Job tended to be more certain than he should that he could argue with God and prove his case! CHRISTIANS KNOW FROM THE HISTORICAL FACT OF THE INCARNATION OF GOD (i.e., the coming to earth in a fleshly body in the Person of Jesus Christ), that no human can have a completely clean conscience. Even those who do not have the written law of God are condemned by their own consciences (Rom. 2:12-15). Even “nature” itself reveals from heaven, in the “things that have been made” that every human being is a sinner and under the wrath of God—for the whole creation speaks of it’s “futility and bondage to decay” (Rom. 1:18-23; 8:18-15). And the New Testament Scriptures declare that all have sinned (Rom. 3:10-20). No human being could write his own law and live up to it! Human beings cannot even claim they are perfectly innocent of breaking human laws legislated by their own civil governments! SO EVEN THOUGH JOB WAS A RIGHTEOUS MAN, WITH GREAT INTEGRITY, AND EVEN THOUGH GOD DECLARED HIM TO BE SO, GOD STILL HAS TO TEACH JOB THAT HE IS NOT AS “PERFECT” AS HE THINKS! But, thanks be to God, those who trust their minds, hearts, souls, and spirits to Jesus Christ in obedience to his commandments, may expect Him, the Perfect Man, to plead their forgiveness before an Almighty God, on the basis of his vicarious atonement for our sins! All our boasting of a clear conscience and a sinless life should be done “in Christ” (1 Cor. 1:26-31).

Yes! I’ve had “friends” like those of Job—and so have most of you! And they are exasperating! But Christians must learn to forgive their “friends” who are, even unwittingly, enemies! Forgiveness is not something that “comes naturally.” It is a result of the Holy Spirit of Christ living within a person through believing and obeying Christ’s word! IF CHRIST HAS FORGIVEN US, WE MUST LET HIS HOLY SPIRIT MAKE IT A PART OF OUR CHARACTER AND FORGIVE OTHERS. We must “welcome one another, therefore, as Christ has welcomed us” (Rom. 15:7). And how has Christ welcomed us? BY FORGIVING US! To forgive, one must be willing to “bear the burden” of any offence against him—whether the offender repents or not! That is how Christ “welcomed” the world by his death on the cross. NOW WHETHER THE OFFENDER RECEIVES FORGIVENESS FROM GOD OR NOT DEPENDS ON THE OFFENDER’S REPENTANCE! But our forgiveness of our “enemies” (“exasperating friends”) does not require their repentance—for we are not their judge and they are not responsible to repent to us for judgment. I assume, that Job, being the righteous man he was, forgave his friends at the end of the book, because it says he “prayed for his friends” (Job 42:10). Go, thou, and do likewise!

## JOB 32:1—34:37

Elihu is the son of Barachel. Barachel is of the clan of Buz (an Aramaean name), the brother of Uz (Gen. 22:21) and is therefore closely related to Job (Job 1:1). An Arabian “Buz” is mentioned in Jer. 25:23 along with Tema. Elihu was of the family of Ram, and thus may have been an ancestor of David (32:2; Ruth 4:19-22). Elihu is “an angry young man”—three times in the opening five verses of this chapter he is said to be angry. He is angry at Job’s three “friends” because they could not bring Job to repentance; he is angry at Job for speaking against God’s silence (as if Job had attacked the very existence of God). Elihu does NOT claim divine inspiration—just an “extra” portion of the human intelligence which God’s Spirit had placed in human beings when God created them! He demands to speak and be heard on the basis of his God-given intellect! He’s proud of his intellect! He’s also arrogant about it! He says fooy on all the wisdom of the ancients to which the earlier “friends” of Job appealed. He believes his “wisdom” is greater than all their’s put together! He insists that all present (including all the older people) listen to what he has to say. ELIHU, SETS OUT TO PUT JOB IN HIS PLACE! The arrogance and presumptiveness of youth is continually with us. It takes some “hard-knocks” and time to smooth out the rough edges! Paul had to warn Timothy to “shun youthful passions” and that the Lord’s “young” servant must not be “quarrelsome (2 Tim. 2:20-26). He warned Timothy against “rebuking an older man” and advised him to “exhort him as you would a father” (1 Tim. 5:1) and to never admit any charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses (1 Tim. 5:19). The writer of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes warns against the excesses of youthfulness. THE CHURCH MUST CULTIVATE IN ITS “YOUNG PEOPLE” DUE RESPECT AND DEFERENCE TO THOSE WHO ARE OLDER AND WISER IN THE FAITH. “Young” is never glorified or exalted in the Bible! “Young” in the Bible is always admonished with love and concern that it not repeat the errors of others who were “young” once themselves!

Elihu’s arrogance is evidently because he is “related” to Job. He is the only one of Job’s “protagonists” who addresses Job by his name! Elihu must believe that he has the right by relation and “superior intelligence” to verbally indict Job for being so “sassy” toward God. Elihu takes it upon himself to defend God’s honor against Job and the other “friends” of Job. Elihu’s impudence is sophomoric to the uttermost! He condescendingly takes everyone to task for their ignorance of God and God’s will. HE, LIKE SO MANY “YOUNG TURKS” OF EVERY GENERATION IS CERTAIN THAT HE KNOWS BETTER THAN THE “OLD-FOLKS.” He has not heard from the mouths of Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, or even Job what he thinks is the right theodicy (i.e., a philosophical vindication of God’s allowing of suffering and evil in the world). Elihu will elaborate his theodicy and teach these older men a lesson about God and suffering. Some of what Elihu says about God is correct, but his conclusions as to how that relates to Job’s suffering is wrong! JUST LIKE THE OTHER THREE FRIENDS, HE IS NOT AS WISE IN THE UNREVEALED WILL OF GOD AS HE THINKS! God will correct that, too!

Elihu offers five reasons Job should listen to him: (a) he will speak candidly and

sincerely; (b) he will use his superior wisdom with which he has been created; (c) he will give Job an opportunity to respond—he offers not a sermon like the others, but a dialogue; (d) he will not be condescending (Oh no!) to Job or take advantage of Job's physical weakness; (e) Elihu will not overpower Job as Job had accused God of doing—Job will be able to speak his heart to Elihu! Elihu's admonition is that Job must pay attention to his words—and Job must answer Elihu (if Job can)! ELIHU REBUKES JOB FOR SAYING HE IS "CLEAN OF TRANSGRESSION" (33:9-12). Elihu thinks he knows better than Job whether Job is "clean" or not! Elihu's message for Job is that "God is greater than man!" WOW! THAT'S SUPPOSED TO BE NEWS TO JOB?! Job already knows this and has admitted it. Why does Elihu think Job has an inferior concept of God? Because Job had the effrontery to keep insisting that he is innocent of any of the sins of which he is being accused! Elihu thinks God is so much greater than man he (God) is impervious to man's pleadings—especially pleadings of innocence! Elihu's theology is so much like that of many other Eastern "religions" today—Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism. GOD IS SO GREAT HE IS ETERNALLY AND ABSOLUTELY SILENT TOWARD MAN. God will not speak with man on man's level, for if God came down to man's level he could no longer be God! That is also the concept of much modern "Christian" theology—called "neo-orthodoxy." Neo-orthodoxy is a compound of existential philosophy and liberal theology. Existentialism says man is all alone in the universe. There is no word from outside the human predicament. Neo-orthodoxy says there may be a God but he is "wholly-other than human" and could never speak to man in a divine-human incarnation or in a revelation using the words of human language. If God were to come to earth in a fleshly body and if God were to speak in human language, he would no longer be God. THEREFORE, GOD IS SILENT! For the neo-orthodox we can only "know" God through a "leap of faith" (which means, cast aside the Bible, cast aside history) and have an "existential" experience (i.e., some "feeling" that God exists). BUT NEO-ORTHODOXY CLAIMS THERE'S NO EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE THAT HE DOES! Therefore, if we are ever to "know" God (according to neo-orthodoxy and Eastern religions) we must "be religious" and burn incense, clap hands, ring gongs, pray, go to church, and behave in a "situational-ethical" life (i.e., let the situation dictate what is right, because there are no divinely-revealed, absolute standards of right and wrong). Strict Calvinism is a lot like neo-orthodoxy—God is found in some esoteric "personal experience."

Elihu, being so erudite (highly intelligent), of course, thinks he is sure he knows the totality of the Divine reason for Job's suffering! There are two reasons: (a) Job's afflictions are a warning to Job not to go in the way of "pride" (33:16); (b) and Job's afflictions are to chasten Job for his sin of arrogance (33:18-19). Elihu's theology is defective! It has already been stated in the first two chapters of the book that Job's calamity is to glorify God and show the devil that there are human beings who can maintain their faith even in the face of "inexplicable affliction." Some suffering is for warning (Rom. 1:27); some suffering is for chastening (Heb. 10:32-39; 12:1-17). But remember the man born blind whom Jesus healed! When the disciples asked, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (John 9:2), Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him." YOU SEE, NOT ALL SUFFERING IS BECAUSE THE SUFFERER SINNED, OR BECAUSE HIS ANCESTORS SINNED! SOME SUFFERING IS SIMPLY THAT THE WORKS (GLORY) OF GOD MAY BE MADE MANIFESTED IN THE FAITH OF THE SUFFERER! When that occurs, when the sufferer maintains

his/her faith in God and Christ in spite of the suffering, not only is God glorified, so is the sufferer. The reward for such a faithful one in the next life is “beyond all comparison” (Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 4:16-18). God’s grace is sufficient for the sufferer (2 Cor. 12:9) for in the weakness produced by suffering, God’s power is made perfect. God’s power reaches the goal in the life of the sufferer which God intended by allowing the suffering. Elihu did not know this about God and suffering!

Elihu is certain Job’s suffering is a consequence of his need to repent. God is telling Job what is right (33:23) and Job should comprehend that God is being “gracious” to him and keeping him from going down to the pit—if only Job will pray to God and “fes-up,” “I sinned, and perverted what was right, and it was not required to me.” (33:24-28). Job should understand that God is trying to bring Job back from the Pit (Sheol) through chastening him. Evidently, Elihu believes Job has sinned in his plea that he is innocent and because Job has claimed innocence, God is chastening him to keep him from further “arrogance” and eventual consignment to the “Pit.” All Job needs to do is listen to Elihu and speak (confess his sin) because Elihu “desires to justify” Job (33:29-32). IF JOB REFUSES TO GIVE THE ANSWER ELIHU EXPECTS (i.e., THAT JOB IS SINNING) THEN HE MUST “BE SILENT AND LISTEN TO ELIHU AND ELIHU WILL TEACH HIM WISDOM” 33:33). Job should have replied to Elihu as he did to the other “three friends” and say, “Surely wisdom will die with you!” But Job was silent and let Elihu ramble on with his “wisdom.” As wise old Solomon wrote many years after Job lived, “There is a time to keep silence, and a time to speak” (Eccl. 3:7). Job knew it was going to do no good to try to answer Elihu—Job had tried over and over to answer those who were accusing him of impenitent sin and it did no good—none of them paid any attention to him. They had their minds already made up. They had no thought of offering Job some comfort and solace and some attempt to help him in his illness and psychological suffering. We, as Christians, would do well to “hold our tongues” occasionally. There are times when it is better to remain silent—WE DON’T KNOW IT ALL! We don’t have all the answers—just a “hug” would be better than a “know-it-all” attitude!

Elihu takes it upon himself to defend God from the charges of Job that he is being afflicted unjustly. Elihu assumes that he is “wiser” than all the others, including Job himself. Elihu is in love with his own erudition—his power to “reason things out.” Elihu does not seem to understand that there are some things God has chosen not to reveal (Deut. 29:29) and those God keeps secret. Elihu comes at Job with an a priori theological assumption—that Job’s frustration is a sin! Job is not sinning against God—he is merely expressing his frustration at the silence of God. Frustration is not a sin unless it denies God’s promises. Elihu’s motive for “defending” God may have been pure—but he will find out later that it was wrong! GOD’S WAYS DO NOT NEED DEFENDING! HE DOES NEED TO BE PROCLAIMED—TO BE PROVED BEYOND A REASONABLE DOUBT TO EXIST! God is quite capable of defending his actions himself—and he does so to the extent he deems wise and merciful through the revelations he gives to the world (in “nature” and in the Bible). Elihu presumed to speak for God when God had not commissioned him to do so! Even Jesus Christ and the apostles in the New Testament scriptures never defended God’s behavior. Jesus proved he was God in the flesh and predicted his work of redemption. The apostles proved Jesus was the Christ and revealed his covenant of grace to the world in human

language—BUT THEY NEVER PRESUMED TO DEFEND GOD’S ACTIONS OR TO SPEAK FOR HIM IN AREAS WHERE HE HAD NOT COMMISSIONED THEM TO SPEAK!

As James Strauss writes, “This fundamental assumption is part of the “American dream,” i.e., piety is to be rewarded by prosperity.” That’s Elihu’s fundamental theology. It was that also of Job’s three other “friends.” Of course, the opposite, then, would also be theologically “correct”—i.e., wickedness is rewarded by affliction! That kind of theology is the very essence of Judaism, Islam, and other Eastern religions, but NOT OF CHRISTIANITY! Many of the most righteous with whom Jesus came into contact, converted and blessed in the Gospels were “poor” people. Even his own earthly family was not rich—but his mother and “foster father” were righteous! We have already cited the fact that many of the 1st century Christians had their “property plundered” (Heb. 10:14)—and that the apostles were considered the “off-scouring” of the world—and that Jesus said it was nearly impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom. Accumulation of properties beyond what is needed to sustain life and glorify God in supporting the proclamation of the Gospel throughout the world is irrelevant as far as the Christian journey through this life is concerned. As Paul told Timothy, “There is great gain in godliness with contentment; for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world’ but if we have food and clothing, with these we shall be content” (1 Tim. 6:6-7). God’s omnipotence does NOT keep wicked people from “prospering” in this world’s accouterments! The Omnipotent God “makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matt. 5:45). God is “kind to the ungrateful and the selfish” (Luke 6:27) just as he is to the grateful and unselfish! Christians should pray as the writer of Proverbs advises the wise, “Two things I ask of thee; deny them not to me before I die: Remove far from the falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches, feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’ or lest I be poor, and steal, and profane the name of the Lord” (Prov. 30:7-9). THIS IS THE GREAT “SECRET” THING THAT GOD KEEPS FROM US THAT FRUSTRATES US OFTEN AS MUCH AS IT DID JOB AND HIS FRIENDS—“WHY DO SOME WICKED PEOPLE PROSPER, AND MOST RIGHTEOUS PEOPLE SEEM TO BE POOR AND OPPRESSED?” Actually, it is not a “secret”—as we said earlier, God allows this to be so that his glory may be manifested in the world! As James Strauss writes, “From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible is fully conscious that a person’s desert (i.e., what he deserves) and his fortune are not often in harmony. The systems of society, history, and nature are so interconnected that negative repercussions, e.g., famine, earthquake, tornadoes, war, pestilence, etc., do come to those who are not personally guilty of any particular heinous crime. Freedom and responsibility are always within structures.” Solomon saw that reality was far different than Elihu presupposed, even granting the omnipotence of God (e.g., Eccl. 2:14-17; 9:11-12; 10:5-7).

Elihu exposes his real attitude toward Job (34:31-37). He believes that Job was a sinner sometime earlier in life, and is now a defiant rebel under his afflictions. Elihu had assured the three former “counselors” to Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, that he would not use their kinds of arguments, yet in this speech he follows their lead. In fact, Elihu’s tirade is even harsher than almost anything that the three “friends” have said. Elihu would have pressed Job to the very end of his rope. Elihu wants Job to be even

more afflicted than he is so that Job would change his attitude toward God, because Elihu believes Job is responding like all wicked people do! Elihu does not take into account what Job has said about his strong, steadfast belief in his "Redeemer." Elihu does not understand that it is frustration not "wicked rebellion" that is issuing from the heart and falling from the lips of Job! In defending God's omnipotent justice, Elihu is impugning Job's honesty about his innocence. None of the "counselors" to Job knew anything about the contest between God and Satan. Consequently Elihu's assessment of the reason for Job's suffering and expressions of frustration was incorrect! What Christian who has ever been as severely afflicted as Job would not feel frustrated? What Christian who is honest with himself/herself, and with God, would deny such frustration? Even if it is not expressed, it is there, in the heart, and God knows about it! IT CERTAINLY WOULD BE OF NO HELP TO A CHRISTIAN SUFFERING AS JOB DID TO WISH UPON HIM/HER MORE AFFLICTION! Remember, "the goodness of God leads to repentance," (Rom. 2:4) just as surely as chastening does! We should pray for those under affliction (who are not saved) that God will be good to them that perhaps they will be lead to repentance and spiritual transformation through God's mercy (Rom. 12:1-2).

## JOB 35:1—37:21

Elihu is implying that God is so great he cannot be “touched” by any human behavior! Elihu’s contention is that human wickedness and human righteousness both “touches” only human beings one way or another. As we have said before, this is the theology of so many “world religions” today (other than Christianity), including much of Judaism and certainly all the others (i.e., Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism). It is even a part of modern, liberal Christianity advocated by Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, and others. Their “theology” insists that God, in order to be God, must be completely separated from all that is made of matter—human beings, the world, the universe, etc. God is “Wholly Other” and man must do the best he can to “find” God through some “existential” leap of faith which is beyond the cognition of knowing him through the divine record of the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. Modern “neo-orthodoxy” is a religion of “feeling”—of some subjective experience that puts man in touch with God. This theology insists God could never have become man and come to earth in a human body. It theorizes that Jesus Christ was a “good man”—perhaps the “best” man who ever lived—but only a man and not God in the flesh. **GOD IN THE FLESH COULD NEVER BE BECAUSE GOD IS ABSOLUTELY TRANSCENDENT.** Accordingly, if God came to earth and allowed himself to be incarnated in a human body, he would not be God! Actually, what Elihu is implying is that Job is simply “reaping” the consequences of his secret wickedness—according to Elihu God is unconcerned with Job’s predicament—Job is going to have to straighten out his problem by giving up his secret wickedness! **THIS MAY BE THE “THEOLOGY” OF MAIN-STREET-AMERICA, TOO!** Most people, unless they are thorough students and believers of the Bible, tend to think that God is unconcerned with what they do until after they die—then they will go to heaven and God will be pleased because they have more in the “righteous” column of their life-ledger than in the “wicked” column.

“On the other hand”(reminds one of Tevye in Fiddler On The Roof) says Elihu, 35:9-16) the “wicked” (as Elihu believes Job to be at present) cry out but God does not answer (35:12) because of the pride of evil men. Elihu reprimands Job’s impertinence (35:14) and audacity to have cried out to God when he has not repented of his sin. This, says Elihu, is the reason God is continuing Job’s affliction. Elihu talks out of both sides of his mouth. First he says God is impervious to every behavior of man, then he says God does not hear because man (he means Job) is a hypocrite! As far as Elihu is concerned, Job’s cry to God is “empty talk—multiplying words without knowledge.” **ACCORDING TO ELIHU, JOB NEEDS A GOOD “LESSON” FROM ELIHU ABOUT GOD AND INTEGRITY AND REPENTING!** Elihu is NOT correct that Job was being proud and arrogant and disbelieving of God when he kept insisting on his integrity. So far as Job knew, he had committed no sin which he deemed worthy of the terrible affliction he was under! **AND JOB WAS RIGHT! GOD VINDICATED JOB’S INTEGRITY AT THE BEGINNING AND THE END OF THIS BOOK!** God will vindicate all his precious “saints” (i.e. Christians) at the judgment day in and because of the vicarious death of Jesus Christ! The devil and all his hosts put together will not be able to bring anything against God’s “elect” (Rom. 8:31-39). Not one sin will be there to taint the Christian—nothing will be able to separate him from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

The redeemed, sanctified, saved, purified Christian will live for eternity in the vindication of Christ's vicarious atonement—the believer's faith will be reckoned unto him as righteousness (Gen. 15:6). The Christian will be justified by faith and his covenant relationship to Christ.

Elihu is presumptuous to think he can speak for God, when God has not commissioned him to do so (by confirming Elihu's words with miracles as God did Moses, the prophets and the apostles)! Anyone who claims to speak for God, or to be speaking as God directs them, had better be able to confirm their "commission" from God by real, indubitable, credible, verifiable signs and wonders and miracles as did the prophets and apostles! That goes for modern-day "prophets" or predictors of the future! Elihu assumes that his wisdom is God's wisdom—and the wisdom God has Elihu presumes to speak in the matter of Job's predicament! Elihu claims to have "perfect" (i.e., complete) wisdom in this matter (36:4). Earlier Job had asked why the wicked are allowed to live (21:7). Elihu claims he knows better than Job—they are not allowed to live! But Elihu's statement flies in the face of reality—many "wicked" were living at the very moment Elihu was uttering the denial! God still allows the wicked to live—some to a "ripe old age." Elihu says the wicked "die in their youth"—WRONG. Not all the wicked die young nor do all the righteous live to "ripe old age." THAT IS THE WHOLE POINT OF THE "WISDOM LITERATURE" (i.e., Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes) OF THE BIBLE—FRUSTRATION WITH THAT VERY FACT! Not even God's own Son lived beyond 32-33 years of age—he died in the prime of manhood—and he was absolutely righteous! Elihu repeats the essence of all his verbosity—all his speaking is summed up in this—if a person accepts affliction as discipline and turns to righteousness, then one may be saved from affliction. Discipline can deliver the impious; thus therapy ends in thanksgiving. Elihu's "wisdom" to Job is that Job needs to give up his secret sin and turn to righteousness. Elihu even alleges that Job's earlier prosperity generated his corruption and injustice, which brought God's judging affliction upon him. BUT GOD WILL TEACH JOB THAT HE CAN HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD WHILE HE IS SUFFERING, AS WELL AS AFTER HE IS VINDICATED!—IF ONLY JOB WILL TRUST GOD ALMIGHTY TO KNOW WHAT HE IS DOING! (See chapters 38-42; Phil. 3:10; Rom. 8:17). We fellowship with Christ by "sharing in his sufferings" because this brings glory to God and Christ—thus we share in glorifying God.

Elihu admonishes Job that he has had the wrong spirit toward his sufferings (36:17-21)—he accuses Job of being judgmental toward the wicked! Elihu tells Job that his attitude toward the wicked has caused him to judge himself—because Job has some heinous sin he is covering up. Job should not be yearning for justice, says Elihu, for if justice comes it will cut him off in his place (36:20-21). THAT COULD NOT HAVE BEEN ANY HELP AT ALL TO JOB—JOB WAS TRYING TO SORT OUT ALL THE REALITY HE KNEW. What Job knew as reality was—the really wicked are afflicted, but those who have lived relatively righteous lives (and Job has already documented his righteous living) should not suffer from the hand of a just God! Now, when Elihu comes flat out and warns that Job is condemning himself—it is almost the last straw! Isn't there a "relative-righteousness"? Clearly, all people have sinned and fall short of the glory of God! That is a "given"—God has said so! But aren't some people more righteous than others—or to put it another way, aren't some people worse sinners (i.e., more wicked) than others? The answer is an unequivocal YES! Surely Mother Teresa was not as

wicked as Adolf Hitler or Joseph Stalin. Surely, most of those who claim Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are not as wicked (or are more righteous) as many of those who worship at the feet of “evolution” or humanism, or a thousands other false “gods.” Therefore, it is not fitting, it serves no purpose, and is unjust to call a man like Job “wicked” and deserving the affliction he is getting! We are told by Christ in the Gospels and by the apostles in the epistles that we are to make those “relative” judgments in this world between “wolves in sheep’s clothing—between dogs and swine—between children of light and children of darkness (Eph. 5:1-20). GOD HAS ALREADY SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT ON JOB TO THE DEVIL (chapters 1 & 2) AND WILL SET IT STRAIGHT AT THE END OF JOB’S FINAL PLEA! A merciful God is capable of distinguishing between depraved wickedness and humble righteousness. God will be the final judge of all mankind. But only those who have had their “robes washed white in the blood of Christ” will be declared perfectly righteous!

Elihu is not contradicting himself—he is merely trying to defend God against Job’s complaints. Elihu is accusing Job of saying, “God has done wrong.” Job has never said that! ALL JOB WANTS IS SOME ANSWERS—SOME EXPLANATION OF WHY HE HAS BEEN “SELECTED” OUT FROM AMONG ALL THE OTHERS WHO ARE MUCH WORSE SINNERS THAN HE TO BE SO SEVERELY AFFLICTED! Yes, Job is frustrated; yes, Job is exasperated with these “friends”s who have presumed to tell him that he is hiding and continuing some sin that deserves what he is getting! Yes, Job may have over-estimated his own standing with God in all the righteous deeds he has done—but he does not understand why, when he has been so good to others, that he has been chosen to be so thoroughly undone! Elihu presumes to be able to unravel for Job the “webs of wickedness” the other “friends” have woven together. BUT ELIHU HAS NOT SHED ANY NEW LIGHT ON THE PROBLEM—HE HAS ONLY DEEPENED THE DARKNESS! Elihu, too, is stuck with his theology that righteousness always produces material blessings, and wickedness always produces material deprivation! Plus, Elihu has arrogantly presumed to defend God against what he consider’s Job’s attacks upon the mightiness and transcendence and imperviousness of God. Elihu wants Job to understand that God cannot be bothered with him until he gets rid of his terrible wickedness! Elihu is saying, in essence, “Others have sung of God’s great handiwork while you, Job, are complaining about it. Praise is at the heart of true righteousness. If You, Job, are righteous, praise will break forth from your lips. All other men have looked upon creation in awe and deep satisfaction. But not you, Job. A man must have perspective, as I, Elihu have, “from afar off” in order to understand the greatness of God’s creation.” So much for help from Elihu! But Elihu is not through with Job yet!

Elihu’s point to Job is that God is in control of everything in the universe. Job wants God to speak to him. Elihu is saying, that God is speaking to Job in the thunder and lightning and the amazing things of the weather that come upon the earth. Elihu tells Job that when these storms occur, the beasts comprehend that God is speaking and they “go into their lairs and remain in their dens.” ELIHU IS SAYING THAT JOB SHOULD UNDERSTAND THAT GOD IS SPEAKING TO HIM THROUGH “NATURE” AND THAT HE SHOULD “CORRECT” HIS WAYS (37:13). Yes! God does speak through nature—even the New Testament scriptures attest to that. God’s “wrath is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their

wickedness suppress the truth. For what can be know about God is plain to them, because God has sown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse..." (Rom. 1:18-20). Paul told the heathen at Lystra that "they should turn from these vain things (idols) to a living God who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways; yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness." (Acts 14:15-17). Paul told the philosophers of Athens that God "made from one every nation of men who live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their habitation, that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel after him and find him. Yet he is not far from each one of us, for 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your poets have said, 'For we are indeed his offspring.' Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the Deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, a representation by the art and imagination of man." (Acts 17:26-29). The OT scriptures are filled (the Psalms, the prophets) with statements that God "speaks" through his creation. **BUT JOB WANTED A "CONVERSATION" WITH GOD—JOB WANTED TO HEAR GOD SPEAK WORDS, MAKE A STATEMENT, AND REVEAL WHAT THE PROBLEM WAS THAT BROUGHT UPON HIM SUCH ALMOST UNBEARABLE AFFLICTION!** Job already knew what Elihu was saying about God speaking in "nature." Job has been eloquent enough on that issue himself—he doesn't need Elihu to tell him that. That is true of most heathen and "backsliding" believers today—**THEY DON'T NEED TO BE TOLD ABOUT GOD'S EXISTENCE—THAT CAN BE SEEN IN "NATURE."** What most people need today is to be convinced, persuaded, brought to accept, the **FACTUALITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES AS THE DIVINELY REVEALED WORD OF GOD FOR SALVATION!** Most people today simply are not convinced that the New Testament scriptures can be accepted, because they are so exclusively limited to salvation in the vicarious death of Christ. The mood for today is "tolerance" of all religions—that all people who believe in some kind of God will be saved from eternal damnation. Not so, according to the New Testament!

The foregoing question brings us to this answer. Elihu is NOT correct in portraying God as incommunicado and unapproachable! **HAD NOT GOD SPOKEN TO MANY OF THE PATRIARCHS VERBALLY (i.e., Adam, Cain, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob)? Certainly!** God also spoke through angels, and in visions and dreams—not only to believers, but to unbelievers as well! God speaks when, how and where he wants! God chooses the methods and the times when he wishes to speak audibly and verbally—**BUT HE IS NOT INCOMMUNICADO!** There was always a verbal message from God handed down from one patriarch to another. And after the patriarchs, God spoke verbally to Moses his Law! Then, last of all God spoke to the world **INCARNATED AS A HUMAN BEING (THE PERFECT MAN) WHO WAS "IMMANUEL"—GOD WITH US—GOD IN THE FLESH—SPEAKING AND ACTING WITHIN THE HUMAN FRAME OF REFERENCE!** And God was going to speak verbally and audibly to Job and his so-called "friends" a few words which are recorded in chapters 40-42 of this book! **BOY! DID ELIHU (AND THE OTHER FRIENDS) GET THE SHOCK OF THEIR LIVES?! THEY HAVE MAINTAINED THAT GOD DOES NOT SPEAK EXCEPT THROUGH "NATURE" AND THROUGH THE WISDOM OF THE ANCIENTS....GOD WILL NOT SPEAK TO JOB AND CLEAR UP THE PROBLEM OF HIS AFFLICTION!**

Wrong! The New Testament is plain to say that when God spoke verbally through his Son and the Son's apostles (who then wrote down the words of God's Holy Spirit) that would be the last time God would verbalize his will to mankind. God's last words to the world have been spoken and written down in human language (1 Cor. 2:6-13). The New Testament scriptures are the last words from God (Jude 3, 1 Cor. 13:9-10; Heb. 1:1-4, etc.) until Christ comes again. Those who will not listen to the apostles word will be condemned when Christ comes again (Gal. 1:8-9; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; 1 John 4:1-6). Yes! Indeed! God has spoken!

## JOB 38:1—40:5

The accusation of Satan has not stood. The Lord permitted Job to be severely tested. Job has continued to cleave to God for an answer to the dilemma and frustration he is suffering for wanting to speak with God and get some answers as to why he is suffering. Job's faith has soared to heights never experienced when he was healthy and prosperous. But Job has audaciously insisted time after time that God should give him some answers (e.g., 13:22; 31:36). **THAT REQUEST IS NOW ANSWERED—AND HOW!** God decided that he had enough of Job's complaining, and enough of the hypocrisy and presumptuousness of the "four wise men" who didn't know what they were talking about! God is also merciful and gracious and wants to be gracious to Job as well as give Job a lesson that will edify him and make him even more faithful to his God. **GOD WANTS TO "COMMUNE" WITH, HAVE CONVERSATION WITH, THOSE WHO TRUST HIM AND LOVE HIM! BUT GOD WANTS TO DO MOST OF THE TALKING!** That's because he is absolutely wise and just and faithful and loving. He wants us to "know" him and you never get to "know" someone until you hear them tell you what they think and believe and value and feel. **GOD WANTS JOB TO REALLY "KNOW" HIM SO HE IS GOING TO TALK TO JOB.** Job is going to have to shut up and listen to God for awhile! Christians should take the advice of Reuben A. Torrey (world evangelist, teacher, educator, president of Moody Bible Institute, and founder of BIOLA, and known as "Mr. Fundamentalist."). On his death bed, when his son-in-law asked him if he would do anything different if he had his life to live over, Torrey said, "I would spend less time praying and more time reading and studying the Scriptures." **CHRISTIANS SHOULD SPEND MUCH MORE TIME LETTING GOD TALK TO THEM THROUGH THE BIBLE THAN THEY DO TALKING TO GOD IN PRAYER!**

I know of only a few scientific theories as to how the universe was formed. There is the "big bang" theory that matter or energy at one time, billions of years ago, became so dense that it exploded and formed our universe of billions of "stars" and planets, including the earth. Some people think that is the "method" by which God "created" the universe. There is the "the-universe-is-eternal" theory, i.e., the universe as we know it has always been in existence and life began in the ocean with the conglomeration of a few amino acids, etc., and has subsequently "evolved" on its own to the present status of all living things. **THE QUESTION FOR BOTH OF THESE THEORIES IS "WHO PUT THE MATTER OR ENERGY THERE TO START WITH?"** Did matter or energy "form" itself out of nothing? The only viable explanation for the universe (or "creation") as we know it is that stated in Psalms 33:6-9 and Hebrews 11:3—**GOD, THE ETERNALLY, ALMIGHTY POWERFUL AND WISE PERSON MADE OUR MATERIAL UNIVERSE (INCLUDING PHYSICAL HUMAN BEINGS) OUT OF "NOTHING" AND ORDERED IT TO REPRODUCE AFTER ITS OWN KIND (Gen. 1:1ff).** Paul says in Romans 1:18-23 that this proposition has been shown to mankind by God and can be clearly deduced from "the things that have been made" and that anyone who rejects it is "without excuse." God is not only asking Job this question in 38:4, but all the "wise" men who came to counsel Job. If they are so wise let them answer this question—"Where were you (i.e., do you know anything about) when I laid the foundation of the earth?" The solution to the "scientific" question about the formation of

the universe can only be arrived at by believing the authenticated, verified, historically accurate Word of God! The problem of the “formation” or origin of all that exists materially is a problem of faith—not science! **SCIENCE CANNOT ANSWER THE QUESTION OF ORIGINS! THEY WERE NOT THERE WHEN THINGS ORIGINATED!** Scientists deal only with origins in the de facto frame—i.e., after the fact! In other words, there are some things about existence that **ONLY GOD KNOWS! IF HE CHOOSES TO REVEAL IT IN HUMAN LANGUAGE, WE MUST BELIEVE IT NO MATTER HOW INCREDIBLE IT MAY SEEM TO OUR LIMITED KNOWLEDGE!** That is what he is saying to Job about the problem of suffering!

Dr. Harry Rimmer who wrote the book, *The Stones Cry Out* (a book on the archaeological data that confirms the accuracy of the Bible), and wrote other apologetics books, said he was once attending a “scientific seminar” and overheard a couple of skeptical scientists deriding the Bible for being so inaccurate about life and existence and that modern science had pretty much made the Bible irrelevant. Dr. Rimmer interrupted their conversation, with a simple question, “Tell my good sirs, what holds the world in space.” They quickly replied, “Gravity, of course.” Dr. Rimmer then asked, “What is ‘gravity?’” They replied, “That’s what holds the world in space.” **SUDDENLY IT DAWNED ON THEM THAT THEY HAD “ARGUED IN A CIRCLE,” THAT IT WAS A FALLACIOUS ARGUMENT AND THEY HAD “EGG ON THEIR FACE.”** It is God, through Christ, of course, “upholding the universe by his word of power” (Heb. 1:3). It is in Christ that all things “consist” (i.e. “hold together” (Col. 1:17). “In the beginning was the Word (Jesus Christ), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made” (John 1:1-3). “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only (unique, Greek, monogenes) Son from the Father” (John 1:14). **CHRIST HOLDS THE WORLD IN SPACE. CHRIST HOLDS THE UNIVERSE IN HIS HANDS. HE IS THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA, THE BEGINNING AND THE END.**

With all our technology and “scientific advancements” human beings still cannot even “predict” the weather, let alone control it (38:8-38). “His (the Lord’s) way is in whirlwind and storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. He rebukes the sea and makes it dry, he dries up all the rivers...the mountains quake before him, the hills melt; the earth is laid waste before him, the world and all that dwell therein” (Nahum 1:3-5). It is the Lord who controls nature. He brings famine, drought, rain, blight, mildew, locust plagues, pestilence (Amos 4:6-11). The Lord forms the mountains, and creates the wind, and declares to man what is his thought; who makes the morning darkness, and treads on the heights of the earth (Amos 4:13). The Lord forms light and creates darkness—the Lord makes weal (blessing) and woe (Isa. 45:7). It is the Lord who “measured he waters...and marked off the heavens with a span...enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure (actually, in Hebrew, “a third”—the land-mass of the earth is one-third of the planet, and the seas are 2/3rds of the planet) and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance” (Isa. 40:12). The Lord changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings (Dan. 2:21). Science does not know who keeps the seas from going any further than their boundaries. Science does not know how to control the length of light and darkness—but God does (and did make the sun go back a distance). Science cannot even explore the deepest part of the ocean

(the Mariana's Trench). Science cannot know what lies ahead for the human being beyond death (but Christ holds the keys to Death and Hades—existence after death). Science thinks the sun provides light to our galaxy—but who or what makes the sun to shine? Man is at the mercy of snow-storms, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, volcanoes, etc., etc., and in most cases does not even know what causes them! **THE POINT GOD IS MAKING TO JOB IS THAT THERE ARE LITERALLY MILLIONS AND MILLIONS OF THINGS IN THIS UNIVERSE THAT GOD KNOWS BUT IS KEEPING SECRET!** So why is Job so insistent that he must know the Divine secret of suffering? Believers “take for granted” (i.e., take by faith) the awesome, wonderful, inexplicable, undiscoverable things of the universe—Job must “take on faith” that God has a good reason for allowing him to suffer!

Another awesome and undiscoverable matter in man's “universe” is the instinctive behavior of the animal world. Human beings (i.e., alleged “scientists”) keep trying to insist that certain animal species have cognitive, logical, reasoning powers—but as yet they have not proven it. Animals subsist by instinct. The urge to hunt and kill their food is innate—it is inherent in their genetic make-up. Animals may “teach” (to some extent) their young how to hunt their subsistence, but animals do not “teach” their young to want to hunt. Many “animal-rights” and “eco” activists today keep insisting that man will completely extinguish animal and plant life on earth if we keep on driving our cars, and cutting our timber, etc., etc. **BUT THE CHRISTIAN NEEDS TO KNOW THAT THE UNIVERSE IS IN THE HANDS OF GOD....HE CHANGES TIMES AND SEASONS...HE WILL NOT ALLOW THE WORLD TO BE DESTROYED UNTIL HE IS READY TO DO SO HIMSELF.** And when God destroys this universe in order to create a new one, he will do so instantaneously, with an all consuming fire which will consume even the basic elements that make the universe exist (2 Pet. 3:10). Animal behavior is, for the most part, still a secret man has never (and will never) fully discovered. So it is with the origins, reasons for, and outcomes of suffering, affliction, chastening and discipline from the Lord. **IT MUST BE “COMPREHENDED” BY FAITH!** It is one of the things to which we look that are unseeable (2 Cor. 4:16-18).

James Smith writes: “In several ways the ostrich is a strange bird. The female ostrich flaps her wings joyously ‘with pinion and plumage of a stork.’ The point seems to be that there is an external similarity between the ostrich and the stork. The disposition of the two birds, however is very different. The ostrich buries her eggs and allows the earth to warm them (39:13-14). The ostrich leaves some eggs outside the nest to serve as food for the newly hatched brood. To this practice the pet refers when he says, ‘she forgets that a foot may crush them, or that a wild beast may break them.’ She appears to treat her young ‘harshly.’ The reference is to another strange practice of this bird. When chased by hunters the adult birds will act as decoys, running hither and yon in an effort to draw off the intruders. From man's point of view, the ostrich shows no concern for her young. The mother ostrich acts as she does because God has given her an instinctive wisdom. He has granted to that bird a swiftness of foot. The ‘flying’ of the ostrich consists of swift running, in which she maintains her balance by her outspread wings and tail. The bird has been clocked at up to forty miles per hour over short distances. With her head elevated to full length, she is able to laugh at the relative slowness of the horse and its rider. So why didn't God make it possible to ride the ostrich into warfare? This combination of questionable and admirable qualities

illustrates the creative genius and sovereign ways of the Almighty. God has chosen to create the bizarre bird; and Job can do nothing about it (39:17-18).” So, God chose to allow Job to be afflicted by the devil to a bizarre and frustrating and debilitating condition—and Job can do nothing about it! THAT IS WITHIN THE SECRET WORKINGS OF GOD—all man can do is accept it by faith that God will one day vindicate those who remain faithful. Some day, when time shall be no more, those who have trusted God and accept Christ’s vicarious death, will “know” why the ostrich was created thus—they shall also know why God allowed in this life on earth some of the righteous to suffer and some of the wicked to prosper.

Job is non-plussed! Job puts his hand over his mouth! He is speechless! HE HAS JUST FLUNKED A 40 QUESTION “POP QUIZ”? Job has utterly, utterly flunked it—he could not answer one question. His score is ZERO, ZILCH, NADA, AIN (Hebrew for “nothing”). Job has come face to face with his ignorance-quotient! The reality of his incompetence has slammed him square in the “kisser.” He and his four “counselors” thought they had God all figured out! They rambled on, and on, and on about how much they knew about God’s governance of the universe. So, God gave them an “exam” of some 40 questions about origins and perpetuities in the “universe.” THE STARTLING FACT IS—HUMAN “SCIENCE” AND HUMAN SPECULATION (PHILOSOPHY) IS STILL UNABLE TO ANSWER ANY OF THESE QUESTIONS IN RESPECT TO ORIGINS & PERPETUITIES. Human science is still flabbergasted as to where everything came from and how it is perpetuated! Science has discovered what is called “The Second Law of Thermodynamics” (or “Entropy”) which states that scientific observation in this “closed-system” we call the cosmos or universe concludes that all matter is being constantly transformed into energy, and that energy is becoming less and less available or ordered! In other words, the universe is “running down”—dissipating—and, left to itself, the universe in some far distant time will become an matter-less place unfit for the existence of life as we know it now! However, it also appears to human science that some FORCE or MIND is constantly sustaining or re-creating matter in a life-cycle that replicates itself (in plants and animal bodies alike). But the “big question” is WHO OR WHAT started all this universe and WHO OR WHAT is doing the replicating? WHO IS IN CONTROL? That was what God was asking Job and his “friends.” And they were dumb-struck—they shut their mouths—they couldn’t begin to explain it all!

We learn from “nature” that responsibility for the origin & perpetuation of the cosmos (universe) is an ETERNAL, FORCE named “God” and all that exists reveals and “speaks” his glory and wisdom (Psa. 19:1-6; 33:5-9; 104:1-35; Rom. 1:18-23). We learn that God did not create the cosmos a chaotic mess but what was created out of “nothing” visible follows “laws” of divine governance (Psa. 119:89-91; Isa. 45:18-19; Acts 14:15-17; 17:24-29; Rom. 1:27; 2:14-15; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:1-3; 11:1-3). All of this which is learned by honest-minded people from “nature” is confirmed by the divinely-inspired human-language revelation from God called the Bible! WE ALSO LEARN, WITH JOB, AND HIS THREE FRIENDS, TO STAND IN AWE, SHUT OUR MOUTHS, AND ADMIT OUR IGNORANCE OF ORIGINS AND PERPETUITIES! We learn just how humbly grateful we should be that God so loved, he created a world in which human beings are the highest order, and that he wishes to redeem his creation for his own pleasure and the creation’s joy! CHRISTIANS, OF COURSE, LEARN MUCH MORE ABOUT

CREATION, PERPETUATION, REDEMPTION, SANCTIFICATION, JUSTIFICATION AND ETERNAL LIFE IN A NEW CREATION FROM JESUS CHRIST AND HIS APOSTLES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES! Read them every day! And stand amazed in the presence of Jesus Christ, for whom and by whom and through whom all this was created and redeemed!

## JOB 40:6—42:16

God spoke to Job “out of the storm” for the effect of the sheer majesty and power of a storm. There is always something awesome and fearsome about a storm. God should be always revered as majestic, powerful, awesome, fearsome. Elijah expected God to always “storm about” as he revealed himself or spoke to man—but God “snuck-up” on Elijah and spoke to him in a “still small voice.” But the OT prophets are replete with apocalyptic (crisis) literature portraying God as “in the whirlwind, in the flood, in the lightning and thunder, in the earthquake.” **GOD’S VERY PRESENCE SHOULD ELICIT HUMILITY AND HELPLESSNESS IN HUMAN BEINGS!** Do you remember what Peter said when Jesus miraculously gave the disciples such a huge catch of fish their boat began to sink? Peter, seeing the awesome power Jesus controlled over the “nature,” knelt down at Jesus’ knees, saying, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” And when the disciples, who thought they were about to perish in the storm on the Sea of Galilee (Mt. 8:18-27; Mk. 4:35-41; Lk. 8:22-25), Jesus calmed the storm with simply a word, “Peace be still.” They were filled with awe, afraid, and marveled, saying, “Who then is this that he commands even wind and water, and they obey him?” Needless to say, God got Job’s attention when he spoke “out of the storm.” God was going to lecture Job on his proper relationship to the Almighty. God was going to “put Job in his place” and no better way to start than with a “storm.” Have you not heard the occasional use of the word “God” when newscasters interview people who have just experienced a tornado, a flood, an earthquake, an avalanche—something utterly uncontrollable by human beings? **THAT’S WHY GOD STILL SPEAKS TO US, EVEN IN THIS 21ST CENTURY OF HUMAN ARROGANCE ABOUT HOW MUCH OF “NATURE” WE NOW UNDERSTAND AND CONTROL! Wrong!**

God sternly charges Job to “play God,” and see if he could do any better. God challenges Job to assume control over the universe. If Job’s criticism of God is valid, then he ought to know how to govern the creation. If Job has the wisdom and integrity he thinks he has, let him make it visible. Let Job “deck himself with majesty and dignity, glory and splendor, and pour forth the overflowing of his anger to abase every one that is proud.” Let Job obliterate the wicked and remove them from the sight of men. Universal rule requires the power to implement universal control. Does Job have sway over the kingdoms of the world—if not, let him be silent until he knows what he’s talking about. When Job demonstrates his power to obliterate the unrighteous in the grave, then he can govern the universe. The Lord grants that if Job had the credentials and power to govern the vast complex creation he has the right to criticize, but only under these conditions. If he can do what he has charged the Lord has neglected to do, then Job could save himself from suffering and death. That challenge is still from the Bible (God’s word) to 21st century humankind—especially the “technocrats” who think that through science and technology man will be able soon to control the universe, determine his own destiny, and have no need of “God.” Do you think human beings have demonstrated the power, wisdom, knowledge, and moral integrity to be in charge of the universe? We can’t even control our own urges and supply our own needs for existence (air, water, light, etc.). Has modern man demonstrated a providential control over the world that is superior to that of God as expressed in the Bible? **NOT BY A**

LONG-SHOT! Human beings cannot even administer justice on an even-handed standard. This is exactly what Job and his friends complained about in their world—the wicked and powerful prosper and the weak and poor are oppressed.

Behemoth is sometimes translated, “cattle” (Psa. 8:8; 73:22; Joel 1:20; Habakkuk 2:17). But it is a well-accepted interpretation by Bible scholars, that the behemoth is the hippopotamus whose habitat is the Nile Valley. This powerful giant of an animal is untamed by human beings—and in ancient times, uncontrolled. Strangely enough, this gigantic animal, though fitted by its size and strength to prey upon other creatures, feeds upon grass like the cattle. To satisfy its hunger the animal de-pastures whole mountains where other beasts “play”—i.e., they do not fear this grass-eating monster. Behemoth is not intimidated by raging rivers. His hunger satisfied, Behemoth lies down in thickets of lotus, reeds and willows. But he is alert and so powerful that when he is awake no human being can tame him as a pet. The point is, Behemoth is more powerful than Job, yet Behemoth does not dare criticize his Creator as Job has done! The OT prophets use “nature’s” obedience to its Creator as an illustration by which to verbally chastize the “chosen” nation (Israel-Judah) for its disobedience of the Creator. OF COURSE, SOME WILL SAY, BUT “NATURE” HAS NO FREE WILL. SO WHAT! GOD CREATED ALL HIS “CREATION” (NATURE AND HUMAN BEINGS) TO OBEY HIM—THOSE WITH FREE CHOICE SHOULD BE SO AWED WITH THEIR FREEDOM TO CHOOSE AND AWED BY THE GRACE OF GOD, THEY SHOULD OBEY HIM JUST AS “NATURE” DOES! Animals and “nature” obeys God instinctively—because God is its “Creator.” It ought to be just as instinctively that human beings obey their Creator. That is, in fact, what Paul is teaching in Romans 1:18-32—human beings disobeying God become worse than animals—Peter teach the same thing in 2 Pet. 2:10-22!!

Leviathan is common accepted by Bible scholars to be the Nile crocodile. His thick hide cannot be penetrated by a fish-hook. Can anyone take him captive? Would anyone entertain the vain hope of subduing the Leviathan? All of mankind is impotent before this monster. But Jehovah can control this beast. Other animals, and even people, were held captive or led about with hooks drawn through the nose or jaw—but not Leviathan! Leviathan makes no covenants with, nor serves any one or anything—except Jehovah! Leviathan does not plead for mercy, does not cower before any man or animal—Jehovah asks Job if he wants to make Leviathan a playmate. Does any human want to catch Leviathan and then bargain with one another over how he is to be divided? Before anyone attempts to take Leviathan, realize what you are trying to do. No one lives to tell of his efforts because there is no vulnerable spot on Leviathan. Arousing Leviathan is sheer folly. It is madness to arouse the monster—AND IT IS PURE FOOLISHNESS TO CRITICIZE JEHOVAH! No one could face Leviathan and survive. Why does Job think he can face God and survive. Job cannot even stand before one of God’s fiercest creatures. Why does he suppose that he can encounter his Creator and come out of the conflict victoriously? (41:10-11). Upon the earth there is not another animal like the crocodile—and man is struck with terror at the thought of being in the clutches of those teeth (41:14). Job cannot even encounter this fearsome creature and survive—let alone the God who inspires awesome terror as Creator and Sustainer. If Leviathan is invincible, then why does Job think God is not also invincible to his encounter? Think, Job, if Leviathan can invoke fear in human beings, what about

God?

Job affirms in faith God's wisdom and power and God's goodness and graciousness. God cares for all his creation. God's brief verbal excursion throughout the system of the universe and societies of nature has provided perspective from which Job is given a preview of God's purpose. Job's complaint had never been against God's power—only God's will and "justice" in allowing a righteous man like himself to suffer. God's complaint was not even that God couldn't execute "justice"—it was just that Job didn't think God was being "just" with him. Now Job has a personal knowledge of Jehovah's government of the universe! God's purpose is not horizontal, but vertical. God's purpose is moving upward, vertically, toward redemption. In order to understand God's ways with man, man must not absolutize any single part of the cosmic vertical, because ignorance of the meaning of the direction will make man disillusioned with, or angry at, God. Job acknowledges now that God's rebuke of him has been justified. Now Job knows this is a fact of reality. Only those in ignorance of God's complete redemptive purpose would speak out against him. Job's former knowledge of God's wisdom, power and grace seems to him to be only such knowledge as one gets by "hearsay"—i.e., knowledge that is confused and defective. Now his knowledge of God is that of "eyesight"—immediate and full (42:5). Job's last words are the ones he had resisted throughout the tense and tedious debate with his friends— "Therefore, I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (42:6). Job is now convinced of that which he had doubted before—i.e., of God's providential, redemptive care for his creation. He had asked for assurance that God was on his side (19:23-27), and the Lord has once for all spoken to Job—Job's demand has been met. Job can only repent of his former attitude. Job, by his repentance, has removed himself from the center of the universe. Job is truly a "crucified" self. After all, the only alternatives are either an "autonomous self" or a "crucified self." Job accepts God's evaluation of himself. We are OK only when God says we are OK! At last, Job has acknowledged God as his "organizing center" and neither his family, nor his prosperity, nor their cultural advantages are now the "center" of his focus. In conquering himself, Job has conquered Satan, and has entered the peace which comes only through complete surrender to the will of the Divine Redeemer. That "surrender" to Jesus Christ is what is so desperately needed by billions of self-centered, "self-fractured" people in our 21st century world! It was desperately needed by Job's "friends."

God turns and addresses Eliphaz (and the other "friends") of Job. God is angry that they have all along misrepresented him (God). They have distorted the will of God in their counsel to Job—yet they spoke as if each word they uttered had been inspired by God! Job is at last vindicated—God has not only broken his silence and given Job a lesson he will never forget, he has condemned Job's adversaries. James Strauss writes, "The integrity of God's impatient protester has now been rewarded. He has also judged pious hypocrites, even those who pretend to speak for him...God in his mercy has bathed this tormented soul in the healing oils of love and forgiveness. My servant, so acclaimed in the beginning and in the end, has survived the temptations of suffering and pain. He has indeed been in the 'furnace of affliction.'" Job is a righteous, forgiving man—he has experienced the grace of God and is more than willing to make intercessory prayer for his "friends" when they have shown they want it by offering sacrifices to God as they were instructed. **AND GOD HAS GRACIOUSLY PROMISED**

TO “ACCEPT” JOB’S INTERCESSION ON THEIR BEHALF. Where, even in the NT, can we find such a vivid and historical account of the efficacy of intercessory prayer—perhaps the only such example to exceed this would be the intercessory prayer of Jesus himself in John chapter 17, or Jesus’ prayer for his enemies as he was being nailed to the cross. One of the most comforting promises of the NT is that when we don’t even know how to pray as we ought, the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words (Rom. 8:26).

Job was given more flocks, more children, more friends, and 140 years more of life—he saw his sons to the fourth generation. Notice: the Lord restored Job’s prosperity after Job had prayed for his friends—after Job had demonstrated by “works” his repentance. But, Job’s prosperity was not restored as a reward. Being successful, prosperous and physically well is not proof of being saved. Whatever God restored to Job was by God’s grace—and this is a lesson Job learned the “hard way.” Surely we have learned this much now by our study of the experience of Job! Whatever we have, whatever we are, whatever our circumstances—even be it a “thorn in the flesh—it is ours because the grace of God is sufficient for us (1 cor. 12:7ff). We quote from James Strauss: “So ends the life of one of God’s great servants. The Septuagint adds a notation after this verse (42:17) asserting that Job will share in the resurrection of the dead and further traditional details of his life. In the Shattering of Silence God vindicated Job’s integrity. Suffering men can be righteous. Our Suffering Savior is ultimate proof of this possibility. Life begins as a problem, continues as a promise, and is the fulfillment of a purpose. The dawn of God’s new day broke over the destructive darkness that all but destroyed Job, our contemporary. Vindicated, Job was no longer enslaved to himself, or his former preoccupation with happiness, or enjoyment of prosperity, family, health, or prestige in the community, for he now knows that before he ‘had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee’” (42:5). Christians can be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord their labor is not in vain (1 Cor. 15:58) because they have “seen” by believing the testimony of those who “saw” with their eyes, the resurrected Jesus Christ, Lord and Savior.

### Introduction to Paul T. Butler Th.D

Paul was born in Springfield Missouri and graduated from Conway High School prior to enlistment in the US Navy. He began serious bible study with correspondence courses from San Jose Bible College. He later enrolled in Ozark Bible College and acquired his Bachelor of Theology degree June of 1961. He received a Master of Biblical Literature degree from Ozark in May of 1973. He received a Doctorate of Theology from The Theological University of America in October of 1990.

Paul taught at Ozark Christian College from 1960 to 1997. He also served many years as registrar for the college.

### Introduction to the Sound Bible Study project.

The Sound Bible Study project is a cooperative effort of Christian educators and Jordan Media Enterprises LLC to provide the serious examination of the Scriptures for the conscientious student. All the teachers are experienced educators who have spent countless hours in the classroom on both sides of the lectern. The audio recordings and written notes are made available for those who wish to learn God's Word at a collegiate level but have been unable to matriculate. There is no intention to compete with the many faithful Bible schools, but rather to serve along side and strengthen both the student and the teacher for a stronger and more effective Kingdom of God that knows how to properly divide the Word of God.



