

Two Year Bible Trek
Week 47
Week 47 – Job 20-42

Key Concepts: the two main concepts in Job are first that evil happens to good people and that even the best people cannot always figure out why God does/allows such evil.

Stories: We begin with Zophar's second argument, Job's reply, the third statement from Eliphaz, Job's next reply, a third discourse from Zophar, Bildad's third statement, a very short reply from Job (4 verses), the continuation of Bildad's third statement, Job's reply, a continuation of Zophar's third statement, a hymn about wisdom and how it is hard to find, Job's final defense, the cessation of the three "friends" arguments, the arrival and theological reflections of Elihu (a series of five poems and a conclusion), God speaking from the whirlwind (twice) and Job's two responses, and the conclusion where Job gets back everything he lost with interest.

Short Summary: we pick up where we left off with the last lesson with Job and his friends trading theological arguments and personal insights as they attempt to deal with why do (or do not according to the friends) bad things happen to very, very good people.

Zophar returns to the stage and implies that the reason Job is suffering is because he is evil. "He will perish forever like his own dung."

Job moves in a direction taken by the writer of Ecclesiastes who intones that the wicked often do not get punished in this life (which for Job is the only life there is) even when they refuse to turn to God.

Eliphaz reenters the argument with the contention that because God does not need anyone, not even a philosopher like Elephaz, and therefore Job's supposed righteousness would not matter at all. However if Job returns to God and confesses then God will forgive and all will be well.

Job responds with a desire to come into God's presence and present his case, in which case, Job believes God would acquit him. At the same time he wonders about the justice of things when the evil ones prosper while God pays no attention to the prayers of the oppressed.

We meet Bildad for a moment as he remarks that nothing in creation can be "clean" before God.

Job accuses Bildad of consorting with evil spirits and Bildad replies with the thought that Job will never be able to escape God even in death.

Job makes one last defense by reciting his good deeds and faithfulness to God before he encounters Elihu who claims that the three friends have it all wrong, but he, Elihu, has it right. Elihu tells Job that God's ways are always just, that Job is arrogant, that God does not need humanity, affliction always has a purpose, that God always punishes the wicked and rewards the just.

Finally we hear from God. First God makes it clear that none of the four friends got it right. They were incorrect in their observations and assumptions. Second, while God makes it clear to Job that Job cannot understand the vagaries of the world as does God, that Job is not to grovel in front of God. God tells him twice, "Gird up your loins like a man." In other words Job is one of God's wonderful creatures and even though Job cannot fathom the complexity of the world, God still recognizes him and engages him in conversation. God cares. Job does not have his questions answered but he is affirmed by God.

In the end we return to a narrative in which God restores two fold to Job all that he had lost.

1. Have you ever heard any of the friend's arguments about the causes of evil before?
2. What do you think about Job's contention that the evil in this world often prosper?
3. How does the happily-ever-after ending strike you?