

Bible Challenge 2018

Week 18: April 29-May 5

Outline:

Job 1-2: Introduction to the Book
Job 3: Job's first Speech
Job 4-5: Eliphaz' First Speech
Job 6-7: Job's Response to Eliphaz
Job 8: Bildad's First Speech
Job 9-10: Job's Response to Bildad
Job 11: Zophar's First Speech
Job 12-14: Job's Response to Zophar
Job 15: Eliphaz' Second Speech
Job 16-17: Job's Second Response to Eliphaz
Job 18: Bildad's Second Speech
Job 19: Job's Second Response to Bildad
Job 20: Zophar's Second Speech
Job 21: Job's Second Response to Zophar
Job 22: Eliphaz' Third Speech
Job 23-24: Job's Third Response to Eliphaz
Job 25: Bildad's Third Speech
Job 26-31: Job's Third Response to Bildad and a Summary Speech
Job 32-37: Elihu's Rebuke of Job
Job 38-41: God's Rebuke of Job
Job 42: Job's Humility and Restoration

The book of Job is one of the most complex pieces of literature found in the ancient world, though often in today's scholarship, it doesn't get the credit it deserves as it is part of the Biblical text. There can be little doubt that were it not part of sacred writ, it would be read alongside of the works of Homer, Virgil, and Plato. The story that frames it, in chapters 1, 2, and 42 form a very simple narrative of a man being tested by God for the purpose of teaching Satan (the Accuser) a lesson. He loses everything, proves faithful, and in the end is not only restored to prosperity, but is blessed by God. And, as it were, all live "happily ever after," though much wiser than they were before these trials.

What is contained, though, within the other 39 chapters is a complicated series of dialogues between Job and his three companions — "wise men" from other regions that come to speak with Job. There is also the rather enigmatic character of Elihu and God's final monologue. These various wise men represent a number of false or at least misguided ideas that not only existed in Job's day but have existed throughout time and still are very much present today, making this book relevant on multiple levels. The most basic question it asks, though, is why does a good and loving God permit bad things to happen in the lives of his people? A relevant question indeed.

The question of dating often comes up when it comes to the book of Job and there is little consensus as to the matter. There are widely two schools of thought. One school suggests that Job lived in the pre-flood days along with others like Noah. This is based on the notion that Job clearly understood what Leviathan and Behemoth were (presuming them to be what we call dinosaurs today).

The second view (the one to which I would ascribe, suggests that Job is a contemporary of Isaac or Jacob. This is based on the fact that Bildad is called a "Shuhite" (Job 2:11). Further, one of Abraham's children, conceived by Keturah, was named Shuah...those who descended from him would have been called "Shuhites." Both are good arguments and well within the scope of the text, we just cannot be dogmatic one way or the other.

A third view suggests that the external frame of the story (Chapters 1, 2, 42) are the oldest remaining portion of the story and the central, poetic account was written by a priest years later — with the priest (under guidance of the Holy Spirit) essentially putting words into the mouths of these "friends." So long as one would hold that the words that the author was putting into the mouths of these three historical figures were accurate, this view does not conflict with that of inerrancy.

Eliphaz

Space does not permit us to look at each of Eliphaz' three monologues, but here is a man from Teman (a city in the region of Edom — Ezekiel 25:13 — Edom is located in the southern region of what is today Jordan) whose name means "My God is Pure Gold" —

clearly an idolater.

His worldview, not unlike many of the pagan religions of the ancient times (and of Islam today!) falls into the category of "Fatalism." In other words, why bother striving for excellence and honor, what is going to happen is going to happen. Job 4:17 sums up the idea by simply asking the question, "Can mortal man be right before God?" The answer, of course is no...not on our own merit. And the fatalist would recognize that and just leave it in the hands of the stars.

Bildad

We have already mentioned that Bildad was a Shuhite, a possible descendent of Abraham through Shuah. Shuah settled around the Red Sea, though there is some indication that his empire would spread west into modern Libya. There is a tradition that states that the continent of Africa gets its name from Shuah's nephew, Epher...

Bildad holds to a classic works justification worldview. If you do lots of good things, you merit blessings from God. If you do bad things, God pours out his wrath on you. Since he sees the wrath on Job's head, the natural assumption is that Job has sinned in a big way. He betrays himself in this misjudgment. He does make a very significant point of observation (found in Job 8:13) when he points out that whomever forgets God will have all hope fade from his or her life. It is a sad testimony, but a true one.

Zophar

The third companion is a Naamathite (the region of Naamah is believed to have been in the northern part of what is today, Saudi Arabia). We do not know much about what his name means and guesses abound. Most commonly argued, though, is that it refers to the whistle of a bird, but others suggest it is derived from an Arabic term, have suggested "yellow" or something along those lines.

As to his monologue, Zophar seems to be the most hot-headed of the three. He rebukes Job and basically says that you just cannot know the mind of God, so you cannot be right. This worldview is something akin to what would be called Neo-Platonism — there is a view that truth is out there, but it was unknowable.

Zophar has the distinction of being the only one of Job's companions that is not given a third monologue. Then again, these three are in pretty hot water with God for their misrepresentation of his nature, so it is perhaps a blessing that Elihu interjects and the cycle of these three men was put to an end.

Elihu

Elihu, by his own admission, is a younger man, but is one who has been observing this series of dialogues. He is never mentioned earlier in the story and he seems to leap right onto the page and then, after he has said his piece, he jumps right back off of the page. Some textual critics consider this a later addition to the text, though, if it was, it would have been a rather sloppy one (and one that robs Zophar of his third monologue!). A better answer is that Elihu is an outside observer or perhaps Job's secretary, recording the conversations and events for posterity. It could very well even be that it is Elihu who is the author of this book, which would explain how he might jump into the fray, saying, "Look, I've heard enough of your bickering!" And, while his arguments are not perfect, he is the best of the bunch, a reminder that wisdom and spiritual maturity do not always go hand in hand with chronological age.

God

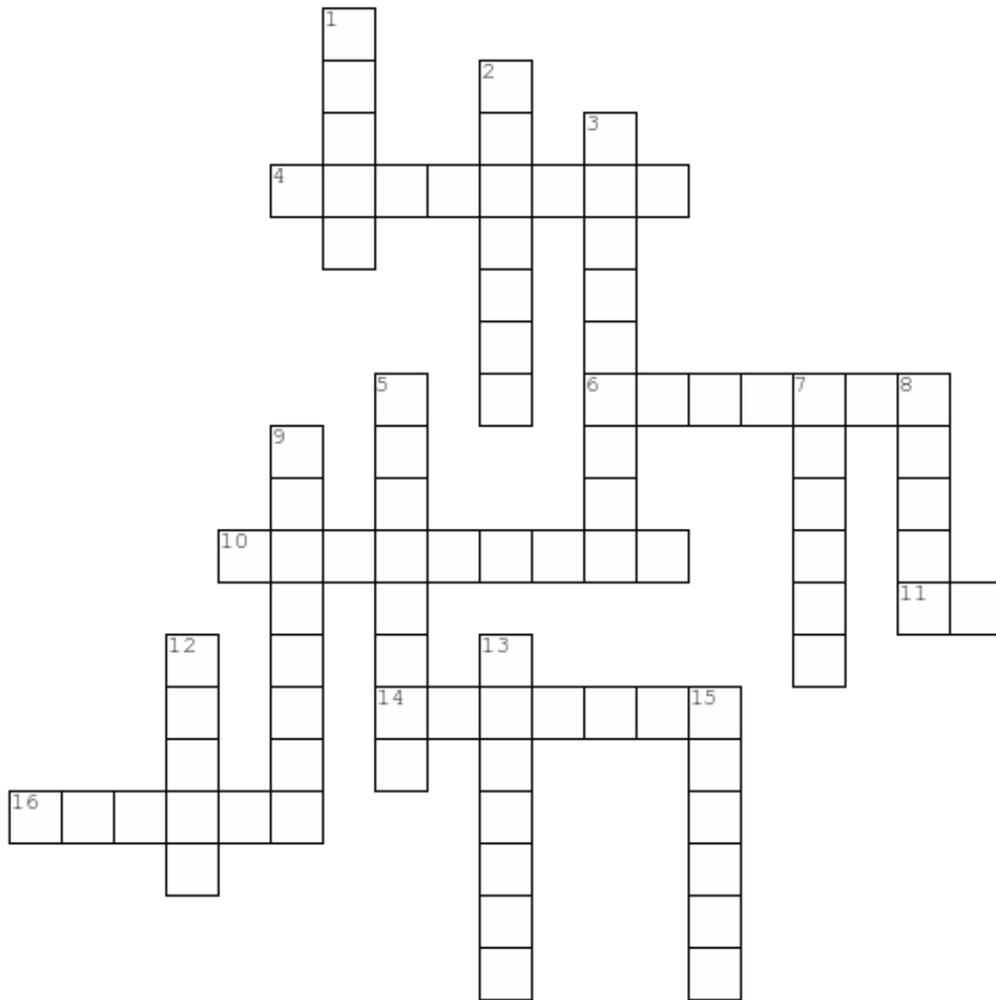
The other person in the dialogue has been God. All through his defense, Job has been saying "why me!" When God comes onto the scene, it is as if he is saying, "Why not you?" God is God and we do not always understand his ways, yet they are good.

Restoration

The end of Job has two aspects to it. The first is God's rebuke of Job's three companions. They had blasphemed God by failing to accurately represent his character and are deserving of death, but Job makes a sacrifice to atone for their sins. Elihu is not condemned. Job and his wife are then restored.

Week 18: Job

Complete the crossword below



Created with TheTeachersCorner.net [Crossword Puzzle Generator](http://TheTeachersCorner.net)

Across

4. 'For I know that my _____ lives...'
6. 'Man who is born of a woman is few of days and full of _____.'
10. God speaks to Job out of this.
11. This is the land from which Job comes.
14. This companion of Job was most definitely an idolater.
16. 'it is the spirit of man, the _____ of the Almighty, that makes him understand.'

Down

1. Job and his wife had this many daughters before tragedy struck
2. 'The Lord has given and the Lord has taken away, _____ be the name of the Lord.'
3. This creature breathes fire and has mighty armor.
5. 'Behold, blessed is the one whom God _____.'
7. This companion of Job may be Abraham's descendant.
8. A young speaker in Job, one who shows up and then disappears from the story.
9. This creature is a large semi-aquatic creature, maybe a sauropod.
12. This person comes to challenge God's counsel.
13. Wisdom is learned in _____ before God.
15. This companion of Job only has two discourses, not three.