

Wisdom in Job

The Form of Job

- Job is one of the greatest literary treasures in the world
- It is a carefully structured dialogue between Job and his well-meaning, but desperately wrong, ‘comforters’
 - Bildad, Zophar, Eliphaz, & Elihu
- Thus, it is important to pay special attention to who is speaking at any given time, to ensure that one isn’t heading the advice of the theologically inept ‘comforters’

The “Comforters”

- The purpose of the dialogue is to establish convincingly that what happens does not always happen either because God desires it or because it is fair
 - The ‘comforters’ act as foils to this truth
 - Foil: “a character who contrasts with another character —usually the protagonist— to highlight particular qualities of the other character or some truth trying to be conveyed.”
- They represent the viewpoint that God is not simply involved in the daily affairs of life, but that God is in fact constantly handing out judgment through the events of this life
 - Their view is that life goes well when we do good, and poorly when we sin
 - It is the same logic that Jesus had to correct among His disciples (John 9:1-3)
 - It is also reflected in the ‘prosperity gospel’ preached by some today
 - This logic is based upon the assumption that if God is in control, everything that happens must be God’s doing
 - However, that is not what Scripture teaches
- Rather, the Bible teaches that the world is fallen, corrupted by sin, and under the domination of Satan (John 12:31)
 - And that many things that happen in life that are not as God’s wishes them to be
 - Specifically, suffering is not necessarily the result of sin (Rom. 8:18-23)

Job’s Point of View

- However, Job is portrayed as a godly man who maintains his innocence
 - And expresses his frustration at the horrors he has had to endure
 - And cannot understand why such things have happened to him
- The ‘comforters’ see his responses as blasphemous
 - Insisting that he is offending God with his questioning
- Job argues that life is not fair
 - The world is not as it should be
- Elihu (the final ‘comforter’) insists in God’s superior knowledge and ways
 - Though his answer is incomplete

God’s Response

- God Himself finally provides the insight they need by speaking to them directly* (ch. 38-41)
 - God corrects Job and puts the situation in perspective

- While also vindicating him against the ‘wisdom’ of his colleagues
 - Thus God affirms that not everything in life is fair
- But God also comforts Job by assuring him that His ways are superior to ours, and for our good

Summary

- This is wisdom at its finest
 - The reader learns what is simply:
 - The world’s wisdom: seemingly logical but actually wrong
 - God’s wisdom: which builds confidence in God’s sovereignty and righteousness
- This is the OT’s paramount example of speculative wisdom
- Also note the structure:
 - Prose intro (ch. 1-2)
 - Dialogue (3:1-42:6)
 - Prose prologue (42:7-17)
 - Which serves as a reminder of God’s gracious superintendence of suffering
 - And the way that innocent suffering can truly glorify God (1 Pet. 2:20)