

Job 22-27

Good evening and thank you for joining us. We're picking up our study in the OT book of Job, so would you please turn in your Bibles to Job chapter 22

It's been a couple of weeks, so lets remind ourselves of where we're at in our study...

Tonight begins the third and final, (and shortened) round of debate between Job and his three friends Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. This will be the last we hear these guys speak.

We're gonna study chapters 22-27, and the title of tonights message is Struggling in the Silence

Let's pray

Many years ago a journalist was assigned to the Jerusalem Bureau. She rented a flat that overlooked the Wailing Wall. **SHOW PIC** Every day she noticed at the Wall the same old Jewish fellow, praying vigorously. The journalist could smell a story.

One day she met him, and asked, "You come to the wall daily. How long have you been doing this, and what do you pray?" The man replied, "I've been to the Wailing Wall everyday for 25 years. In the morning I pray for world peace - go home, have a cup of tea - come back to pray for the eradication of disease." **SHOW PIC**

The journalist was amazed. “How does it feel to come to this place every day for 2½ decades and pray?” The old man said sadly, “Like I’m praying to a wall.”

That’s how Job felt about his prayers. Job was asking why he’d been struck by calamity, but God didn’t answer.

Job was desperate to know why, but God stayed silent.

Job was demanding to know why – but God remained silent.

Job was pounding his fist and daring God to tell him why – but God was silent.

Job felt like God had abandoned him, but of course that wasn’t the case at all. God was watching, and listening, and at the appropriate time God will pay Job a visit, soon enough. But God responds when God is ready - not when Job says.

In the meantime, what we’re watching is a man struggling in the silence. Have you ever struggled when the person you’re trying to talk to won’t respond?

Here’s the problem when someone chooses not to speak... we oftentimes draw the wrong conclusions about that silent person.

If Kim doesn’t speak to me – I assume, “Oh no, what have I done?”

If my kids aren’t talking - I think, “Oh no, what have they done?”

Silence is difficult to interpret. You can draw the wrong conclusions... This is what has plagued Job, and will continue to do so.

And it's a cautionary reminder for us in those moments when God doesn't reply to our cries, to not draw the wrong conclusions about Him.

Chapter 22 for the final time, Eliphaz accuses Job of wickedness 1-3

1 Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said:

2 "Can a man be profitable to God,
Though he who is wise may be profitable to himself?

3 Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that you are righteous?
Or is it gain to Him that you make your ways blameless? Eliphaz heard all of Job's anguished outpourings to God. So Eliphaz here tells Job that he's thinking too highly of himself. Eliphaz wonders aloud why Job thought he was so special, so profitable to God, and why Job thought God owed him so much.

4 "Is it because of your fear of Him that He corrects you,
And enters into judgment with you? Eliphaz is being sarcastic...Remember the 3 friends faulty theology...that good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people.

In reality though, Job's calamity was the result of his fear of God.

5 Is not your wickedness great,

And your iniquity without end? What a bold, but baseless accusation.

See Job's counselors can't pin a specific sin on Job, so now Eliphaz throws everything but the kitchen sink at him.

What the next several verses describe is a tirade of false accusations against Job.

6-11

6 For you have taken pledges from your brother for no reason,
And stripped the naked of their clothing.

7 You have not given the weary water to drink,
And you have withheld bread from the hungry.

8 But the mighty man possessed the land,
And the honorable man dwelt in it.

9 You have sent widows away empty,
And the strength of the fatherless was crushed.

10 Therefore snares are all around you,
And sudden fear troubles you,

11 Or darkness so that you cannot see;
And an abundance of water covers you.

Now Eliphaz accuses Job of questioning God's wisdom.

12-18

12 "Is not God in the height of heaven?
And see the highest stars, how lofty they are!

13 And you say, 'What does God know?
Can He judge through the deep darkness?

14 Thick clouds cover Him, so that He cannot see,

And He walks above the circle of heaven.'

15 Will you keep to the old way

Which wicked men have trod,

16 Who were cut down before their time,

Whose foundations were swept away by a flood?

17 They said to God, 'Depart from us!

What can the Almighty do to them?'[fn]

18 Yet He filled their houses with good things;

But the counsel of the wicked is far from me. Eliphaz reasserts that God blesses the righteous and judges the wicked, therefore Job is wicked.

19-21

19 "The righteous see it and are glad,

And the innocent laugh at them:

20 'Surely our adversaries[fn] are cut down,

And the fire consumes their remnant.

21 "Now acquaint yourself with Him, and be at peace;

Thereby good will come to you." Eliphaz says Job, if you will get to know God – you'll be at peace. The implication is that Job doesn't know God and needs to repent.

In the next few verses, Eliphaz insists Job's repentance should include giving up his gold. If Job wants to be right with God he needs to repent of greediness

22-30

22 Receive, please, instruction from His mouth,

And lay up His words in your heart.

23 If you return to the Almighty, you will be built up;
You will remove iniquity far from your tents.
24 Then you will lay your gold in the dust,
And the gold of Ophir among the stones of the brooks.
25 Yes, the Almighty will be your gold[fn]
And your precious silver;
26 For then you will have your delight in the Almighty,
And lift up your face to God.
27 You will make your prayer to Him,
He will hear you,
And you will pay your vows.
28 You will also declare a thing,
And it will be established for you;
So light will shine on your ways.
29 When they cast you down, and you say, 'Exaltation will come!'
Then He will save the humble person.
30 He will even deliver one who is not innocent;
Yes, he will be delivered by the purity of your hands."These are beautiful truths from Eliphaz, but the problem is they don't apply to Job!

Chapter 23 -24 Job responds to Eliphaz

1 Then Job answered and said:

2 "Even today my complaint is bitter;
My[fn] hand is listless because of my groaning. Notice by his own admission, Job's become "bitter." Job is going to step out of line, and make some awful statements. This is why we've mentioned several times now that in asking 'why', Job loses his way.

3-5

3 Oh, that I knew where I might find Him,
That I might come to His seat!

4 I would present my case before Him,
And fill my mouth with arguments.

5 I would know the words which He would answer me,
And understand what He would say to me. Job is saying if he can plead his case in God's court – he can issue God a subpoena, and pin God down – Job could force God to answer to his questions. Job is struggling in the silence

SHOW PIC In October, 2007 Nebraska State Senator, Ernie Chambers, filed a lawsuit against God. He accused God of making continuing terroristic threats against mankind and causing "fearsome floods, egregious earthquakes, horrendous hurricanes, terrifying tornadoes, pestilential plagues, ferocious famines, devastating droughts, genocidal wars, birth defects and the like..." To keep the suit from being tossed out of court for failure to notify the accused, Chambers mentioned he'd tried several times to contact God, and serve notice. The Senator said - and I quote, "come out, come out wherever you are..." **CLOSE PIC**

Hey, Ernie Chambers better hope God doesn't reply. Chambers admits God is omniscient so he assumes God knows about the lawsuit.

Listen this was Job. He too wanted to sue God. He had a beef that he wanted to take to court. Job wanted to know why God had

allowed such horrible calamity to take place in his life. Job demands that God answer his questions and tell him why!
6-7

6 Would He contend with me in His great power?

No! But He would take note of me.

7 There the upright could reason with Him,

And I would be delivered forever from my Judge. If Job can just get his case on God's docket he knows he'd be vindicated

8 "Look, I go forward, but He is not there,

And backward, but I cannot perceive Him; Job's arrogance sounds like Senator Chambers, "come out, come out, wherever you are..."

9-10

9 When He works on the left hand, I cannot behold Him;

When He turns to the right hand, I cannot see Him.

10 But He knows the way that I take;

When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold. Suffering has a way of making a person moody doesn't it? And this is what we've continued to see with Job.

At times he comes perilously close to blasphemy - but at other times he has these outbursts of faith. And in v10 here's an explosion... Job senses that his ordeal is some sort of test. He doesn't have all the details. But he realizes a truth, "The stress in my life is often a test of my faith."

The book of Job teaches many lessons, but one of the most vital is that our reactions on earth matter!

To me, the message of Job is one of the most practical in the Bible. Nothing is trivial. Every angelic eye in heaven may be watching you in your current crisis to see if you fold - or stay faithful.

And Job senses that when God is done - after He's turned up the heat - and skimmed off the impurities – and repeated the process over a lifetime, Job will come out as pure as gold. His character will be refined.

11-12

11 My foot has held fast to His steps;
I have kept His way and not turned aside.

12 I have not departed from the commandment of His lips;
I have treasured the words of His mouth

More than my necessary food. Job maintains his innocence and reveals his love for God's Word. Although Job gets very close to blasphemy, it's my belief what keeps Job coming back to not blaspheming God was his love for God's word.

13-15

13 "But He is unique, and who can make Him change?
And whatever His soul desires, that He does.

14 For He performs what is appointed for me,
And many such things are with Him.

15 Therefore I am terrified at His presence;

When I consider this, I am afraid of Him. Despite what culture and society tells us, our lives are at God's disposal to do with any way

He wants. But this isn't a terrifying idea, rather it's a great comfort when we realize His incredible love for us.

16-17

16 For God made my heart weak,

And the Almighty terrifies me;

17 Because I was not cut off from the presence of darkness,

And He did not hide deep darkness from my face.

In verses 16-17 Job admits he's in a dark place. He's weak and terrified by God.

Perhaps you're in a dark place in your life. You're also wondering why.

SHOW PIC It reminds me of Gardner Taylor. He was preaching in Louisiana during the Depression. In the middle of the sermon the building lost its one light bulb. The church was pitch black. The young pastor started to stumble and stammer. Suddenly, one of the deacons shouted, "Preach on, preacher! We can still see Jesus in the dark!" **CLOSE PIC**

This was the lesson God taught Job, and He's teaching us.

If you're struggling in the silence, please know that God is there in our hurt, in our pain, and in our darkest moments.

If your trust in God is based upon feelings instead of faith, it will crumble.

Chapter 24 Job complains of injustice

1 "Since times are not hidden from the Almighty,

Why do those who know Him see not His days? Job wonders why people who know God still have questions about Him. I know Kim Hill, we celebrated our 18th anniversary last month, but do I know all there is to know about her? No, I'm still learning. Job is also learning, and he's perplexed by God's delay in judging the wicked.

2-5

2 "Some remove landmarks;

They seize flocks violently and feed on them;

3 They drive away the donkey of the fatherless;

They take the widow's ox as a pledge.

4 They push the needy off the road;

All the poor of the land are forced to hide.

5 Indeed, like wild donkeys in the desert,

They go out to their work, searching for food.

The wilderness yields food for them and for their children. The wicked mistreat the needy and the poor, yet their families eat well.

It's not fair

6-21 Job cries out why justice isn't done on the earth.

6 They gather their fodder in the field

And glean in the vineyard of the wicked.

7 They spend the night naked, without clothing,

And have no covering in the cold.

8 They are wet with the showers of the mountains,

And huddle around the rock for want of shelter.

9 "Some snatch the fatherless from the breast,

And take a pledge from the poor.

10 They cause the poor to go naked, without clothing;

And they take away the sheaves from the hungry.

11 They press out oil within their walls,

And tread winepresses, yet suffer thirst.

12 The dying groan in the city,

And the souls of the wounded cry out;

Yet God does not charge them with wrong.

13 “There are those who rebel against the light;

They do not know its ways

Nor abide in its paths.

14 The murderer rises with the light;

He kills the poor and needy;

And in the night he is like a thief.

15 The eye of the adulterer waits for the twilight,

Saying, ‘No eye will see me’;

And he disguises his face.

16 In the dark they break into houses

Which they marked for themselves in the daytime;

They do not know the light.

17 For the morning is the same to them as the shadow of death;

If someone recognizes them,

They are in the terrors of the shadow of death.

18 “They should be swift on the face of the waters,

Their portion should be cursed in the earth,

So that no one would turn into the way of their vineyards.

19 As drought and heat consume the snow waters,

So the grave consumes those who have sinned.

20 The womb should forget him,
The worm should feed sweetly on him;
He should be remembered no more,
And wickedness should be broken like a tree.

21 For he preys on the barren who do not bear,
And does no good for the widow. To his disappointment, Job sees
little difference between the plight of the wicked and the righteous.

22-25

22 “But God draws the mighty away with His power;
He rises up, but no man is sure of life.

23 He gives them security, and they rely on it;
Yet His eyes are on their ways.

24 They are exalted for a little while,
Then they are gone.

They are brought low;
They are taken out of the way like all others;
They dry out like the heads of grain.

25 “Now if it is not so, who will prove me a liar,
And make my speech worth nothing?” The inconsistencies in life
are real. God is good, but life ain’t always fair. And this is what
Job is accusing God of-falling asleep at the wheel of justice.

Chapter 25 It’s Bildad’s turn to speak. He talks for just six verses
– then for the next six chapters Job vents his pain and frustration
1-3

1 Then Bildad the Shuhite answered and said:

2 “Dominion and fear belong to Him;
He makes peace in His high places.

3 Is there any number to His armies?

Upon whom does His light not rise? God lights the world for everyone. Who doesn't benefit from His grace?

4 How then can man be righteous before God?

Or how can he be pure who is born of a woman? Bildad says 'who is Job to think he can carry on a conversation with the Almighty?'

5-6

5 If even the moon does not shine,
And the stars are not pure in His sight,

6 How much less man, who is a maggot,

And a son of man, who is a worm?" Bildad wonders, why would God give Job the time of day?

Of course what Bildad, the friends, and Job didn't realize was God's love for Job. And this is a common response when dealing with suffering-forgetting God's love for us when our circumstances don't make sense.

This was the end of Bildad

The third counselor, Zophar, remained quiet. If Zophar made a final speech it was never recorded. In the end none of the three men were able to pin a sin on Job. They hurled all kinds of accusations at him - but they weren't true.

Chapter 26 is a very provocative chapter. Job compares the wisdom God demonstrated in creation with the wisdom of his “counselors.”

In this chapter we glean some details of creation we find nowhere else.

1-6

1 But Job answered and said:

2 “How have you helped him who is without power?

How have you saved the arm that has no strength?

3 How have you counseled one who has no wisdom?

And how have you declared sound advice to many?

4 To whom have you uttered words?

And whose spirit came from you?

5 “The dead tremble,

Those under the waters and those inhabiting them.

6 Sheol is naked before Him,

And Destruction has no covering. Revelation 9 names the angel of the bottomless pit – as “Abaddon” or “Destruction.” Job is saying the king of Hell trembles before God.

7 He stretches out the north over empty space;

He hangs the earth on nothing. Remember these are the words of a man who lived about 4,000 years ago. Job never looked through a telescope. So how does he know the earth is suspended over empty space?

Yet Job's description of the cosmos would fit nicely into any of today's textbooks on astronomy. In fact, a modern astronomer would be hard pressed to come up with words that said it any better than v7 does. God "hangs the earth on nothing..."

Remember what ancient cultures used to believe compared to what Job just declared in v7. When you compare them, it's obvious Job was divinely inspired.

SHOW PIC

The Egyptians said there was an egg, in a primeval sea. It hatched a sun-god, who had four sons. Through their rivalries with each other the world was created. **CLOSE PIC**

SHOW PIC The Greeks said the earth was held up by the arms of a giant named Atlas. **CLOSE PIC**

The Hindus taught the earth rested on the back of three elephants, which stood on the shell of a tortoise, that swam along in a primeval ocean. Job's statements are astonishing in their astronomical accuracy.

But I want to draw your attention to the beginning of verse 7... "He stretches out the north over empty space." God gave the earth a northward projecting axis that points toward the North Star. This gives the Earth its orientation. Anywhere on the planet - north is above or up - south is below or down.

Psalm 75 suggests God's throne in heaven is in the north. **Psalm 75:6 For exaltation comes neither from the east**

Nor from the west nor from the south.

7 But God is the Judge:

He puts down one,

And exalts another.

By leaving out the north – it's implied that God resides there.

Just as hell is in a parallel dimension at the earth's core – heaven could be situated above. Is this why compasses point north? They point us to heaven?

8 He binds up the water in His thick clouds,

Yet the clouds are not broken under it. When we study the preflood era, there's evidence that before the flood, the earth was surrounded by a global vapor canopy.

Thick clouds shrouded the earth, and shielded us from the sun's harmful radiation. This allowed people to live long lives. It also turned the Antediluvian world into a tropical paradise.

“(God's) thick clouds” may be the pre-flood atmosphere.

9-10

9 He covers the face of His throne,

And spreads His cloud over it.

10 He drew a circular horizon on the face of the waters,

At the boundary of light and darkness. Here's another amazingly accurate insight for a man living 4,000 years ago. The ancients thought the world was flat.

But Job says God “drew a circular horizon on the face of the waters.” Job understood that the earth is a sphere. The Bible taught the Earth is round millenniums before Christopher Columbus discovered the New World. It’s another proof of the Bible’s supernatural origin

11-13

11 The pillars of heaven tremble,
And are astonished at His rebuke.

12 He stirs up the sea with His power,
And by His understanding He breaks up the storm.

13 By His Spirit He adorned the heavens;
His hand pierced the fleeing serpent. There’s a ton of debate about the fleeing serpent referenced here. Isaiah 51:9 and Psalm 89:8-10 also speak of a serpent associated with the sea that God defeated as a demonstration of His great strength, and identifies this serpent with the name Rahab, meaning proud one.

We see in the bible that Satan is often represented as a dragon or a serpent (Genesis 3; Revelation 12 and 13), and the sea is thought of as a dangerous or threatening place in the Jewish mind (Isaiah 57:20; Mark 4:39; Revelation 21:1).

So, some speculate that Leviathan may be another serpent-like manifestation of Satan, who was the original “Rahab” (proud one).

14 Indeed these are the mere edges of His ways,
And how small a whisper we hear of Him!
But the thunder of His power who can understand?”

The most brilliant theologian knows but a faint whisper compared to the thunder of who God truly is!

This is what we have to remember for those times we were suffering the silence of God. Yes we may not hear His voice, but aren't we aware of the thunder of His power? We know who we serve, we know who we love, even when it doesn't make sense.