

The Key Pieces to the Puzzle:

Understanding the Wisdom Literature (*Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Job*)

Book of Proverbs (Episode 1)

The Bible is like a puzzle in that the more pieces of the puzzle you put together, the easier it is to find the other pieces and put them in the proper place.

There are key pieces of information that we need to know because they unlock the meaning of a book or a passage of scripture.

The Wisdom Literature: the books of Job, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. Scholars refer to these books as the Wisdom Literature because they contain wise sayings concerning how to live a successful life and deal with all of its complexities.

Key pieces of information about the book of Proverbs:

Worldly proverbs are short, popular sayings that give advice or tell you something about life.

Biblical proverbs are inspired by God. They're not based on common sense or practical experience; they're based on the wisdom of God so they're inerrant.

Biblical proverbs, like worldly proverbs, are not promises, with one exception. They explain what normally happens most of the time, but not all of the time.

Proverbs are found throughout the Bible. (Matthew 26:52, Luke 4:23, 2 Peter 2:22)

Psalm 90:10 is a proverb that explains how long a person normally lives if they take care of themselves, but it's not a promise, which means there are exceptions.

Biblical proverbs are not promises, with one exception: *if a proverb involves God's character or nature, it's a promise.*

The aseity of God: *God is entirely self-sufficient and not dependent upon anything else.*

The impassibility of God: *God does not change and therefore is not affected by actions that take place in the world.*

The immutability of God: *God never changes.*

God's character and nature ALWAYS remain consistent and there are NO exceptions!

Example of a proverb that is a promise: Proverbs 3:5-6

Whenever we read a proverb, we should ask this question: Does this proverb involve God's character or nature? If it does, it's a promise. If it doesn't, it's not a promise.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7, Ecclesiastes 7:17, Psalm 39:4; 90:12, Proverbs 22:6, 10:4

Book of Ecclesiastes (Episode 2)

Nihilistic: refers to the theory that there's nothing worth believing in because life is meaningless.

There are 2 key pieces of information a person needs in order understand the book of Ecclesiastes:

1. Hebraism: a Jewish idiom or figure of speech. It's a phrase that's not meant to be taken literally, but figuratively.

Solomon used an ancient Hebraism that's vital to understanding the theme of Ecclesiastes.

The Hebraism Solomon used is "under the sun," which means living without God in your life. (Ecclesiastes 1:2-3, 14, 2:11;17, 3:16, 4:1-3; 7-8, 5:13-16, 6:1-2, 9:3)

The theme for the book of Ecclesiastes: Everything that we do on this earth is meaningless without God in our life.

2. In the ancient middle east, many times the conclusion to a book was also the thesis statement. (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14)

Thesis: a statement that presents the topic of your paper or book and also states your position in relation to the topic.

In the western world, the thesis statement usually appears at the end of the first paragraph of a paper. But in the ancient middle east, they immediately jump into their arguments that prove their point without even telling you what their point is. This is what Solomon does.

The thesis for the book of Ecclesiastes: *Fear God and obey his commands, for this is everyone's duty. For God will judge us for everything we do, including every secret thing, whether good or bad.*

Our duty to God - to fear Him and to keep His commandments - is what gives our life meaning.

Genesis 2:5-6, 7:11-12

Book of Job Episode 1

Job is one of the most fascinating books of the Old Testament.

It falls into 3 different categories within the Bible:

1. The Wisdom Literature

2. Poetic books

3. History

- Job is known as an *anonymous book*; the person who wrote the book is not named. Early rabbis attributed it to **Moses**.
- Job lived either at the time of **Abraham** or shortly before Abraham.
- **Theodicy**: *a theological argument or doctrine that seeks to explain how the existence of evil in the world can be reconciled with the justice and goodness of God.*
- Evil is one of the main arguments that atheists use to try and deny the existence of God.
- The book of Job **IS NOT** a theodicy. It doesn't even touch on the subject of WHY God allows evil to exist.
- Job is a book about grace.

- Job had to learn a very important lesson that we all need to learn: *We can't earn God's favor.*
- **Works mentality:** *the mentality that God rewards and punishes us based on our works.*
- The Prologue (an introductory section that includes the events or actions that lead to another event or situation) is found in Job 1:6-12. Here, the curtain is pulled back so we can see the event that took place in heaven that led to Job's suffering.
- God was not pointing Job out to Satan. **Job 1:8** should've been translated: Then the LORD asked Satan, "*You've noticed my servant Job, haven't you? He is the finest man in all the earth. He is blameless—a man of complete integrity. He fears God and stays away from evil.*"
- The accusation Satan made against Job: *Job only serves you because you bless him and protect him. But if you take away everything he has, he'll curse you to your face and stop serving you.*
- God didn't tell Satan what he could do to Job, or even what to do. He only told him what he couldn't do. In other words, God set certain restrictions and limitations on Satan.
- God didn't cause Job's suffering, Satan did. **Job 1:12**
- God doesn't kill, steal, or destroy; Satan does. "The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life." John 10:10. NLT
- Application: At what point would I break and stop serving God?

Job 40:1-4

Book of Job Episode 2

God didn't cause Job's suffering, Satan did. (Job 1:12)
God doesn't kill, steal or destroy - Satan does! (John 10:10)

- Satan immediately went after Job's possessions. (Job 1:13-22) When Job received news that all of his children were dead, he went into a state of depression and grief. BUT, he also did something unusual. He fell to the ground and he began to worship God.
- So the devil was wrong! He had taken everything from Job and yet Job did not curse God. Instead, he worshiped Him.
- *"The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."* (Job 1:21 KJV) Is this a true statement? No! The Lord gave, but the Lord wasn't the one who took it away - Satan was!
- We must not quote the sentiments of Job or of his friends as if they were biblical truths. The Bible records what these men said but that doesn't mean that what they said was true.
- Job's theology, and his friends' theology, was wrong. Therefore, they came to the wrong conclusions and said things that weren't true. (Job 38:1-3)
- According to God, Job's three friends didn't speak accurately about God. (Job 42:7-8) Job spoke accurately about God, but only after he changed his theology. Job was wrong when he said "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

- The Bible calls death an enemy. (1 Corinthians 15:25-26) God's desire is to abolish it once and for all.
- At this point in the story, Job thought that bad things came from God. He had a works mentality. He believed that God rewards and punishes us based on our works.
- Each time Satan accused Job, he urged God to afflict Job, but God wouldn't do it.
- If Satan could get Job to curse God, then he could get ANY man to curse God.

Proverbs 10:22; Job 2:1-10

Book of Job Episode 3

Even though Job was a good man, he was still a sinner. The word 'blameless' in Job 1:5 (NLT) doesn't mean sinless. When it refers to a person, it means that they love truth and endeavor to live a moral and godly life.

There are 3 men that are said to be more righteous than all other men: Job, Noah and Daniel.

(Ezekiel 14:14,20)

Three friends came to comfort and console Job: Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar. Their advice was based on their theology, and their theology was wrong. They believed that God rewards and punishes us based on our works, which is a works mentality.

A works mentality has 2 parts to it:

1. The belief that good people go to heaven and bad people go to hell.
2. The belief that if you're living the way you should, then good things will happen to you.

Job and his friends all shared the same theology, but when all the terrible things happened to Job, he began questioning his theology. He didn't think he had done anything to deserve what happened to him. (Job 7:15-16; 19-21)

All 3 friends believed that Job must've done some horrible sin for God to have punished him so severely. Job just wouldn't admit it, so they were arguing with him in an attempt to get him to admit he'd committed a terrible sin.

Eliphaz's arguments were based on human experience. (Job 4:7-9)

Bildad's arguments were based on human tradition. (Job 8:8-13)

Zophar's arguments were based on human merit. (Job 11:5-6, 13-20)

God told all three of them they were wrong, and their theology was wrong.
(Job 42:7)

Job changed his theology once he started questioning his works mentality. In defending his integrity and character, he found himself impugning God's righteousness:

1. He accused God of being unconcerned about his suffering. (Job 9:1-3, 11-24; 13:15-24)
 2. He accused God of being unjust. (Job 19:6-11; 27:2-6; 9:27-35; 10:1)
 3. He accused God of being unfaithful. (Job 9:20-24; 10:7,15-16)
- In essence, Job wanted to tell the world how wrong God was.

Job's theology EVOLVED as he debated with his friends.

1. He realized he needed an advocate; someone who could mediate between him and God. (Job 9:32-35) Job is describing Jesus. (1 John 2:1)
2. He realized he needed a redeemer; someone who would pay his debt. (Job 19:25-27) This is exactly what we have in Jesus. (Hebrews 7:22)

Book of Job Episode 4

This message is a theodicy: a theological argument that seeks to explain how the existence of evil can be reconciled with the justice and goodness of God.

One of the most important attributes of God is His justness. (Deuteronomy 32:4)

Because God is just, He must do two things:

1. He must punish sin.
2. He must reward righteousness.

If God didn't do these two things, He wouldn't be just; he would be unjust, and God can never be unjust.

When Adam and Eve sinned, God had two choices:

- 1. He could step in and immediately bring judgment upon Adam and Eve.*
- 2. He could postpone judgment, which would allow God time to establish a means of salvation and give man adequate time to repent and accept His means of salvation.*

Had God chose the first option, Adam and Eve would have been damned forever, with no means to obtain salvation.

The consequence of postponing judgment is that sin is allowed to continue until the time God steps in permanently to bring judgement.

As long as sin is allowed to continue, pain, suffering, and evil will exist.
(Genesis 3:14-19)

The curse that fell on Adam related to his role as the man and his responsibility. (Genesis 3:17)

Because of Adam, the entire earth was cursed, not just the ground.

Genesis 3:18 is an explanation of the curse, and gives us insight as to WHY we experience pain and suffering. The root of the word "thistle" means to release or set free. It implies that the earth and everything in it is now free to

change over time. In other words, plants, animals, and all forms of life will mutate.

According to Hebrews 1:3, all things are held together by the power of God's word. As long as God walked on this earth in fellowship with man, the earth maintained a "steady state" of life and order. When Adam sinned, fellowship with God was broken. Now we have sickness and disease, death and decay, and pain and suffering.

All of creation was subjected to God's curse. (Romans 8:20-21, Hebrews 1:10-12)

There was a time when God stepped in to bring judgment upon the world: when he brought the flood upon the earth. He did this for two reasons:

1. All mankind had become totally consumed with wickedness and evil. (Genesis 6:5-6)

2. To shorten the life-span of man in order to curb the wickedness on the earth. (Genesis 6:11-13)

The Flood was not the Final Judgment. God did not put an END to sin.

Jesus came the first time to save us, but when He comes back, He will come to judge. (John 3:17; 12:47-48)

The reason God has delayed the Final Judgment is because He doesn't want anyone to perish. (2 Peter 3:9)

Summation: The reason God allows pain, suffering, and evil to exist is because He's a good, loving, merciful, and compassionate God. Because He's good, loving, merciful, and compassionate, He has postponed judgment so all of us might be saved.

Psalm 37:32, Isaiah 59:15

