

The Wisdom Literature

Lesson #4

Job 29:1-42:17

Outline

I. **Discourses (29:1-41:34)**

- A. Job's final discourse (29:1-31:40).
 1. Job's past blessings (29:1-25).
 2. Job's present sufferings (30:1-31).
 3. Job swears to his innocence (31:1-40).
- B. Elihu's discourses (32:1-37:24).
 1. First speech (32:1-33:33).
 2. Second speech (34:1-37).
 3. Third speech (35:1-16).
 4. Fourth speech (36:1-37:24).
- C. God responds to Job (38:1-42:6).
 1. First speech (38:1-40:2).
 2. Job humbled (40:3-5).
 3. Second speech (40:6-41:34).
 4. Job repents (42:1-6).

II. **Epilogue (42:7-17)**

- A. God rebukes Job's friends (42:7-9).
- B. Job's prosperity restored (42:10-17).

Notes

Job 29:1-31:40

- Job's past blessings (29:1-25).
 - Job longed for the precious days when he had enjoyed God's watchful care and guidance. God had been his friend. Job had enjoyed the blessings of family and wealth.
 - The public square was the business center, town hall, and courthouse combined. We do not know what city this was, but any city that had a gate and public square was a major urban center. Job was a city "father" who occupied a prominent seat. The reaction to Job in the square is in keeping with his culture and times.
 - Job responded to the poorest of the poor, gave comfort to the dying and joy to widows, assisted the blind and lame, and assumed the role of father and advocate for those who had no one else to look to. He was not just a protector but strenuously opposed the wicked.
 - The man who had provided for others faced the prospect of a shortened life instead of the ideal of 110 years with family gathered about (cf. Genesis 50:22). He had hoped to flourish and to remain strong.

- Job returns to the theme in vss. 7-11. People waited for Job so they could drink in his words. Even his smile carried a blessing. So in this way Job was godlike, so much so that his counsel was valued, his approval sought, and his leadership was accepted with excitement and gratitude.
- Job's present sufferings (30:1-31).
 - Job had spoken of his former life as a hero with his new bow in his hand. But here God has unstrung his bow. Earlier Job's tribe had gathered about to hear every good word that fell from the lips of their leader. But here he was no longer leading the way. Instead he saw himself like a city under siege.
 - Job saw his problem with God as twofold: God would not answer him, and God actively afflicted him. Job's only prospect for the future was death. What was so difficult for him was not the fear of death, for he had already asked for it as a relief, but that he would have to face it with God as his enemy (13:24).
 - Summing up his case, he filled his argument with emotion and righteous indignation. Justice was on his side. The very benevolence he so freely had dispensed he now looked for in vain.
- Job swears to his innocence (31:1-40).
 - Job was denying an especially insidious and widespread form of idolatry: devotion to "the maiden," i.e., the goddess of fertility. As the Venus of the Semitic world, she was variously known as the Maiden Anat in Ugaritic, Ashtoreth in preexilic Israel, and Ishtar in Babylon. He was stressing his allegiance to God.
 - Job uses the next section to clear himself of social sins. He closed the issue with a series of oaths enforced by a final self-imprecation.
 - Job swore an oath that his servants never complained about his lack of generosity. He furthermore denied hypocrisy. This final statement was brimming with confidence in his innocence.

Job 32:1-37:24

- Elihu's first speech (32:1-33:33).
 - The book at this point introduces Elihu, a young man who in deference to age has waited with increasing impatience for the opportunity to speak. Four times in the Hebrew text we are told he was angry. First at Job for justifying himself rather than God and then at the friends because of their inability to refute Job.
 - Elihu started talking about words -- his words. Words have failed Job's friends, but here he was standing by with so many words inside him that he was "bursting at the seams." There was no way that he could hold them back. He promised himself that he would be absolutely impartial.

- Finally Elihu began his argument. He had already shown an awareness of Job's precise wording. Now with some freedom he quoted him, picking out lines from various speeches.
- Elihu had both agreed and disagreed with Job and with his friends. He had added the element of God's mercy, a subject avoided by the friends who constantly appealed to God's justice. A ransom may have to be paid, but people are restored and only then come to make their public confession.
- Elihu's second speech (34:1-37).
 - Elihu claimed he wanted Job to be cleared. It seems Elihu had repentance in mind as he called on Job to "speak" or else listen and learn wisdom. He saw himself as a teacher of wisdom.
 - For most of this chapter Elihu expounded on the theme that God only does right. Job had complained that those who provoke God are secure (12:6) while one who is righteous is ridiculed (12:4; cf. 10:3; 21:7-8; 24:1-12). To Elihu this could mean nothing else than an accusation that God does wrong, and it is unthinkable that God would do wrong.
 - Having ended his defense of God, Elihu resumed admonishing Job. He was apparently trying to show Job how weak his position was by means of an illustration. If someone should repent after God has disciplined him, must God be subject to human wishes as He governs the world?
- Elihu's third speech (35:1-16).
 - Job had raised questions that really bothered Elihu. In this speech he dealt with several very important issues that arose out of Job's problem about God's justice. Elihu began by showing Job how inconsistent he was to claim in one breath that God would vindicate him and then in another to complain he got no profit out of not sinning.
 - Elihu was not totally rigid in his moral justice since he allowed for the possibility of a mediating angel who could provide a ransom for the sinner and plead for grace (33:23-24). There is the possibility that those who cry for relief are also sinful and unwilling to submit themselves to God as their Savior.
 - Elihu felt that failure of the suffering to see that God is also the author of wisdom and joy is a sign of arrogance on their part. Job might not be wicked, but he shared this arrogance and therefore received no answer. Elihu seems to have been offended by the idea that Job considered himself a litigant in God's court.
 - Elihu said that with his empty words, Job should not have expected to be heard. Even worse was Job's rebellious spirit -- chiding God for hiding His face (13:24; 23:3; cf. v. 14) and seeking to impatiently march into His presence (13:15; 31:35-37). Now, with his case be-

fore God, Job dared to complain about waiting for an answer and continued to accuse God of injustice.

- Elihu's fourth speech (36:1-37:24).
 - God's power assures the fulfillment of His purpose. He will never grant life to the wicked but will always see that those who are afflicted receive justice. Furthermore, God never takes His eyes off the righteous, but to eventually glorify them, He must discipline them for their own good.
 - Vss. 17-20 are a sharp rebuke of Job for being unjust and for misuse of his power and wealth. Elihu was admonishing Job to learn the lesson God was trying to teach him through his suffering. Job would someday realize his affliction was of more value to him than his wealth and all his efforts to justify himself.
 - Elihu was impressed with God's voice as His word of dominion and power. By command He controls the snow and rain, and thunder is nothing less than the roar of His voice (cf. Psalm 29). Elihu's heart pounded as God put on an awesome display of His power.
 - Elihu thought that Job needed to stop and think of how absurd his position was. He was asked to supply knowledge he obviously did not have and was chided for his ignorance in the light of God's perfect knowledge. Sweltering in the heat of the day, Job sat helpless. He could do nothing about the weather but endure it. How then can mere man, so lacking in knowledge and strength, expect to understand God's justice?

Job 38:1-42:6

- God's first speech (38:1-40:2).
 - In God's response, He asked Job many questions, but strangely said nothing about Job's suffering. Job was not indicted, nor was he proclaimed innocent. But he also was not humiliated with a list of sins he had committed for which he was being punished.
 - In the ancient Semitic world, control of the rough sea was a unique symbol of divine power and authority. The Lord controls the sea by His spoken word. The Lord's control over the unseen world is just as real as His control over the sea or the land of the living. What did Job know about those realms where no living human being had ever been?
 - The question format was used to impress on Job his inability in performing deeds that take divine power and wisdom. Job could not understand what God was doing in his life, and God was telling him the created world is just as difficult to understand.
 - Job had set himself up as God's accuser. How could Job assume such a position in the light of who God is? After this surveying of the mar-

vels and mysteries of God's created universe, was Job still ready to make his accusations about the nature of God's control over everything?

- Job humbled (40:3-5).
 - God had not crushed Job but had cured Job's presumption. Job had been so changed by this experience that he was released from his problem -- the concern to be vindicated.
 - God had given him no explanation of his sufferings. Job had to trust God as his friend, but he still did not know how God had put Himself on trial when He allowed Job to be afflicted.
- God's second speech (40:6-41:34).
 - In this speech, God would accomplish more than He had in the first speech, where He humbled Job by showing how He was the creator and sustainer of the universe. Here God would convince Job that He was also Lord of the moral order.
 - Job needed to leave that ultimate exercise of justice to God and trust Him to do right. To confirm this truth the Lord proceeded to paint the word pictures of these awesome creatures that defied God and humankind.
 - God states that He alone has the power to control the leviathan; therefore He is the only supreme being. By telling of His dominion over behemoth and leviathan, the Lord is illustrating what he has said in 40:8-14.
- Job repents (42:1-6).
 - Job's response shows that he understood clearly the intent of God's second speech. Job opened his mouth to tell God that he had gotten the message: God's purpose is all that counts; and since He is God, He is able to bring it to pass. There is nothing else Job needed to know, except perhaps that God was his friend.
 - Job admitted that he obscured God's counsel through ignorance. God took the witness stand in his own behalf and cross-examined Job, who now records the final effect of this discussion.
 - Job's prayer had finally been answered. Job did not need to repent over sins that produced his suffering since his suffering was not the result of his sin. But that does not mean that Job had nothing to be sorry for. His questioning of God's judgments is enough for Job to change his mind.

Job 42:7-17

- God rebukes Job's friends (42:7-9).
 - God allowed Job to suffer in order to humiliate Satan and provide support to all the sufferers who would follow in Job's footsteps. Once

the purpose of the book had been fulfilled, there was no need for Job's sufferings to continue.

- The sacrifice performed by Job was an integral part of the worship in which Job prayed for them. Praying for your enemy was already taught and practiced in the Old Testament (Psalm 35:12-14; 109:4-5). Showing mercy to one's enemies was clearly required in Exodus 23:4-5. Since God had a high purpose for Job's suffering, the friends had made themselves enemies of God by accusing Job.
- Job's prosperity restored (42:10-17).
 - Job's relatives, who had kept their distance from his suffering (19:13-15), here proved themselves to be fair-weather friends. Their comforting and consoling came a little late.
 - Seeing one's grandchildren is fulfilled to the fourth generation (cf. Genesis 50:23), and the formula "old and full of years," expressive of a completely fulfilled life, is used (cf. Genesis 25:8; 35:29), indicating the great blessings Job received after his suffering was finished.