



Scriptures and Doctrine :: Interpreting Job

Interpreting Job - posted by todd, on: 2003/8/24 3:52

I recently was looking at a 12 Volume set on the book of Job (approx. 8600 pages) by a Puritan named Joseph Caryl on a website that Greg referenced (www.dustandashes.com). Haven't read it yet.

Also, I have heard in the past that Job is likely *the* single most challenging book in the Bible to interpret.

I have also heard that it's likely the first book to have been written that we now have in the Bible. Obviously not concerning the time frame it talks about (uh, creation?), but when it was actually written.

In the past few months I have been taking my time going through this book. It has been a great blessing. I love the mystery surrounding and within the book. I have actually been singing it, which has been great- especially since most of it is in poetic form.

I have tons of questions lingering in my mind concerning the book, but one stands out right now.

How are we to understand the statements made in this book? I think that everybody agrees that Job's friends were in the wrong in how they dealt with Job. So then, does that take away from what they say as being inspired truth? For instance, I went over Job 25 tonight. It's very short, here it is:

"1 Then Bildad the Shuhite answered,

2 "Dominion and awe belong to Him

Who establishes peace in His heights.

3 "Is there any number to His troops?

And upon whom does His light not rise?

4 "How then can a man be just with God?

Or how can he be clean who is born of woman?

5 "If even the moon has no brightness

And the stars are not pure in His sight,

6 How much less man, that maggot,

And the son of man, that worm!"

So shall we take this text as inspired truth or simply inspired in the sense that the Spirit meant for it to be there and that the recording of the account is accurate and true? Are we to take these statements that Bildad says about God and man as absolute truth, on par with the rest of biblical truth? This dynamic is characteristic of the whole book so far.

I am also wondering how we apply it to what Job himself says. Despite all his accolades in the opening chapter, while God is letting Satan test him, Job does a lot of complaining and whining, etc. He obviously seems angry with God. So how shall we take the things he says while in this state? "Inspired truth" or simply "true that it's inspired"?

I would appreciate any comments/insights concerning all of the above.

Re: Interpreting Job - posted by philologos (), on: 2003/8/24 4:10

Is this a good place to start?

John 11:49-51 And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all,

Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation;

Re: - posted by todd, on: 2003/8/24 13:28

Philo,

I don't see the connection. Could you clarify for me?

Re: Interpreting Job - posted by Jason, on: 2003/8/24 13:53

Job is among the most difficult to *translate*, if not the most difficult. As for its interpretation, I would think it is easier.

My general conclusion about the words of Job's three friends is that they are pretty much right on -- but they don't apply to Job. The point of the book is as much to challenge a formulaic view of God and serving God as anything. They say all the right things, but not at the right times or to the right person. What a lesson we can learn from this!

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2003/8/24 15:22

Hi Todd

Sorry to be so obscure. I was trying to make the point that Caiaphas didn't know he was inspired and was actually acting and speaking in an immoral way, but God was still able to get His word through.

This is a sobering concept for preachers but God's blessing of the word does not necessarily mean He endorses the messenger. Job's 'friends' were a bundle of prejudices and misinterpretations but even in the midst of this truth was coming through.

Balaam is another example of a man 'out of genuine' fellowship with God but who brought through the word of God.

Re: - posted by todd, on: 2003/8/24 18:18

Philo,

So if that is the case, men can't be dubbed "false prophets" on the count that they commit some immoral act, etc. The legitimacy of the prophetic word is not based on the lifestyle or holiness of the mouthpiece. Is that correct?

If so, this makes discerning the truth of the prophetic word that much harder (in human terms) and increases the need for reliance upon the Spirit and not obvious outward signs.

Yet, I am still unsure of this principle as it applies to Job or the rest of the Bible. In the two examples you gave, the Bible itself clearly informs us that what was spoken was true. But does it say anywhere in the Bible that Job's or his friends' statements were true?

Re: - posted by todd, on: 2003/8/24 18:28

Jason,

you wrote:

"Job is among the most difficult to translate, if not the most difficult."

Yes, I should have mentioned "translate" along with "interpret." As far as common understanding, it may well be that it is known for its difficulty concerning translation and not interpretation. But for me, at this point, it is both.

I sympathize with your conclusions about the interpretation and, as of now, I am leaning that way myself. However, would you put what Job or his friends say about God on par with what Paul says about God?

As I am learning and the knowledge of God is being formed in me, I don't know how much credence to give the statements in Job. I may come to a certain place that I feel comfortable with, but at this point it seems to me that the interpretation of Job is subjective. If that is the case, it will only add to the mystique of this unique and wonderful book.

Re: Interpreting Job - posted by discipleonthemove (), on: 2003/9/1 17:05

Skip to Chapter 42 and verse 7:

After the Lord had said these things to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "I am angry with you and your two friends, because you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has."

Again in verse 8

"You have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has."

Perhaps the Bible publishing houses should put a note before Chapter 1 saying "Before reading - see Chapter 42"

Re: - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2003/9/1 17:11

Quote:

-----Perhaps the Bible publishing houses should put a note before Chapter 1 saying "Before reading - see Chapter 42"

AMEN.. lol

Quote:

-----My general conclusion about the words of Job's three friends is that they are pretty much right on -- but they don't apply to Job.

Yes and No! I do believe that the word's of the three friends are mostly truth. But truth spoken in the wrong **way** can malign the character of Him who is spoken about. So they spoke the *right words* but not in the *right way* or in the *right time*.

Re: - posted by todd, on: 2003/9/1 17:56

QQuote:

"Skip to Chapter 42 and verse 7:

After the Lord had said these things to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "I am angry with you and your two friends, because you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has."

Thanks, that's very helpful. But if we take this to mean that everything that Job spoke of God is right, then we have to allow the option that everything that his friends spoke of God was wrong. Right?

So could this simply mean that some of the things Job says about God are right, but some are wrong. AND some of the things that Job's friends said are right, but some were wrong. But overall, Job was found righteous and his friends weren't?

I will probably flush this out more when I get there but would like to hear any more of your thoughts in the meantime.

Greg,
you wrote:

"I do believe that the word's of the three friends are mostly truth. But truth spoken in the wrong way can malign the character of Him who is spoken about. So they spoke the right words but not in the right way or in the right time."

Why do think that most of what the friends said was true? And regardless of your answer, do you think that any opinion concerning this matter is merely subjective?

Re: - posted by Jason, on: 2003/9/1 21:56

I agree, Greg, that is a better way of putting it though.

Re: - posted by discipleonthemove (), on: 2003/9/2 13:37

I think perhaps the most significant verses of the whole book are Ch.19 vv. 25 - 26.

" I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth.
And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God"

Job had faith in His Redeemer. I think this could account for God's favourable view of Job's words - perhaps those words rose to God as Abraham's faith did and caused God to count Him as righteous.

Nice to see Jesus in the very first book of the Bible ever written!