

Sunday Message Notes – Better Bible Reading in 2026

The Joban Poem, Part 2: Surrendering to Humility

Q-Can you identify images you have of God that you inherited?

(We began in Genesis where we encountered Creation almost instantly disappointing God – then we were exposed to difficult depictions of how God dealt with these disappointments:

-Genocide, xenophobia, misogyny, conquest, colonization, even gambling with human life over a cosmic wager). Which depiction works for you? Which troubles you?

In Sum - Job exposes the moral inadequacy of any theology that explains suffering as deserved, redemptive, or divinely justified. Job refuses easy apologetics that blame suffering on sin and invites us to stand with the wounded, to reject simplistic moral explanations, and to pursue justice, compassion, and repair.

I. Introduction

A. Job 1:1 There was once a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job. That man was **blameless and upright**, one who **feared God** and **turned away from evil**.

1. This sets the stage for undeserved suffering.

B. Job 1:6-12 One day the **heavenly beings** (the sons of God) came to present themselves before the Lord, and the accuser (“the” satan) also came among them. ⁷ **The Lord said to the accuser**, “Where have you come from?” The accuser answered the Lord, “From going to and fro on the earth and from walking up and down on it.” ⁸ The Lord said to the accuser, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man who fears God and turns away from evil.” ⁹ Then the accuser answered the Lord, “Does Job fear God for nothing? ¹⁰ Have you not put a fence around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. ¹¹ But stretch out your hand now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face.” ¹² The Lord said to the accuser, “Very well, all that he has is in your power; only do not stretch out your hand against him!” So the accuser^[a] went out from the presence of the Lord.

1. **Sons of God assemble.** God invites “ha-satan” into a conversation. Ha-satan critiques transactional religious practice.

C. Job 1:13-22 – “Job Loses Property and Children” One day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in the eldest brother’s house, ¹⁴ a messenger came to Job and said, “The **oxen** were plowing and the **donkeys** were feeding beside them, ¹⁵ and the Sabeans fell on them and carried them off and killed **the servants** with the edge of the sword; I alone have escaped to tell you.” ¹⁶ While he was still speaking, another came and said, “The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the **sheep and the servants** and consumed them; I alone have escaped to tell you.” ¹⁷ While he was still speaking, another came and said, “The Chaldeans formed three columns, made a raid on **the camels** and carried them off, and **killed the servants** with the edge of the sword; I alone have escaped to tell you.” ¹⁸ While he was still speaking, another came and said, “Your **sons and daughters** were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother’s house, ¹⁹ and suddenly a great wind came across the desert, struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young **people**, and they are dead; I alone have escaped to tell you.”

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²⁰ Then Job arose, tore his robe, shaved his head, and fell on the ground and worshiped. ²¹ He said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there; the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

²² In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrongdoing.

1. Animals and servants are always grouped because they are considered property.
2. But, Job's children exist in a different category.
3. v.22 Job did not charge God?

a. Tensions - Job 2:10 "In all this Job did not sin with his lips." **Job 3:1–3** "After this Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth... 'Let the day perish on which I was born...'"

Job 6:4 "For the arrows of the Almighty are in me... the terrors of God are arrayed against me."

Job 7:20 "Why have you made me your target?" **Job 9:22–24** "He destroys both the blameless and the wicked... The earth is given into the hand of the wicked." **Job 10:3** "Does it seem good to you to oppress...?" **Job 13:24** "Why do you hide your face and count me as your enemy?"

Job 19:6–7 "Know then that God has put me in the wrong... I cry out, 'Violence!' but I am not answered."

II. The Cosmic Wager

Key texts: Job 1:6–12; 2:1–10; 2:3

- A. Job begins not with human sin, but with a heavenly test.
- B. God explicitly says Job is "blameless and upright," and that there is "no one like him."
- C. The question is whether righteousness can exist without reward.
- D. Job's suffering is undeserved, disrupting simple *retribution theology*.

III. The Three Friends: Defending God by Accusing the Sufferer

Key texts: Job 4:7–8; 8:3–6; 11:13–15; 22:4–11

- A. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar try to protect God's justice by blaming Job.
- B. Their theology is understandable from a Deuteronomistic history: suffering must mean sin (**Deut. 28** — blessings for obedience, curses for disobedience / **Joshua–Kings** — Israel's fortunes rise or fall according to covenant faithfulness).
- C. But their certainty becomes cruel: religious explanations that defend God at the expense of the wounded.

IV. Job's Protest: Faith That Argues Without Abandoning

Key texts: Job 3:1–26; 7:11–21; 9:22–24; 13:15–24; 19:6–7; 23:3–9

- A. Job does not abandon God; he argues with God.
- B. He demands **a direct audience with God** (not an explanation from his friends) to present his case and receive an explanation for his suffering ("I desire to argue my case with God" Job 13:3). Job longs to find God so he can "lay my(his) case before him" (23:3–4), and concludes his defense by crying, "Oh, that the Almighty would answer me!" (31:35). God ultimately grants this request by answering Job out of the whirlwind (38:1), though instead of explaining Job's suffering, He reveals His own sovereign wisdom and governance over creation.

V. Elihu: Sophisticated, but Still Inadequate

Key texts: Job 32:1–5; 33:14–30; 34:10–12; 36:15–21

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- A. Elihu offers a more nuanced theology – that good deeds or evil doesn't affect God as the Divine does whatever it wants.
- B. Elihu's speeches remind us that even elegant theology can fail when it talks over suffering.

VI. God's Response: The Theophany (whirlwind) of Unmastered Mystery

Key texts: Job 38:1–7; 38:31–41; 39:1–30; 40:6–14; 41:1–34

- A. God answers from the whirlwind, but does not explain the wager.
- B. Instead, God overwhelms Job with creation's vastness, wildness, and complexity.
- C. The speeches do not solve suffering; they expand the frame.
- D. God is not reduced to moral formulas, human fairness, or theological systems.

VII. Vindicating Job's Protest Against God

Key texts: Job 42:7–9; 42:1–6

- A. God rebukes the friends and says Job has spoken rightly.
- B. This is crucial: Job's protest is not condemned.
- C. Honest lament is more faithful than dishonest certainty.
- D. Job's words are vindicated over the friends' theological defensiveness.

VIII. Surrendering to Humility

Key texts: Job 28:12–28; 38:2–4; 40:3–5; 42:1–6; Ecclesiastes 3:11

- A. Job ends not with a tidy answer, but with a humbled posture before mystery.
- B. Surrender is not silence in the face of injustice, it is the relinquishing the need to define God completely.
- C. Humility becomes the beginning of wisdom—not because suffering is explained, but because false explanations are finally refused
- 1. Theology:** Understanding Suffering, Job rejects easy *retribution theology*: suffering is not always caused by sin.
- 2. Risky:** Job explores whether faith, integrity, and moral life can survive when suffering appears undeserved, God seems silent, and the old equation of righteousness = reward collapses. Job endures while giving God a piece of his mind.
- 3. Contrast:** The apostle James' suffering is for the sake of the Gospel (Acts 12). Job's suffering is caused by God.

IX. Intertextual Patterns: Ecclesiastes 3:11-16 “stand in awe before him.” **Isaiah 45 and 54** - a transcendent God, above our clean definitions of morality, creates darkness and calamity; forges weapons for destruction, abandons us and hides from us for moments, yet returns compassionately (also **Psalms 22:1–2; Lamentations 3:1–18**).

X. Final Thought: When we go looking for final verdicts in ancient texts we often discover the Bible does not settle the matter, but rather, invites us on an exploration of knowing ourselves.

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