

# Frequently Asked Questions About the Old Testament

## SESSION 21 – JOB 22–42

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### **Why does Job reject the counsel of Eliphaz (22:21–30)?**

In many ways (Eliphaz's counsel) is a commendable call to repentance: Submit to God (verse 21), lay up God's words in your heart (v. 22), return to the Almighty and forsake wickedness (verse 23), find your delight in God rather than in gold (verses 24–26), pray and obey (verse 27) and become concerned about sinners (verses 29–30). But Eliphaz's advice assumes (1) that Job is a very wicked man and (2) that Job's major concern is the return of his prosperity (see verse 21). Job had already made it clear in 19:25–27 that he deeply yearned to see God and be his friend.

*–The NIV Study Bible Notes*

### **Can we become prosperous by following God (22:21–25)?**

Yes, we can become “spiritually” prosperous, but not necessarily “materially” wealthy. In the Old Testament, the prevailing principle was that God prospered the righteous. Moses warned about the blessings or curses that would follow either obedience or disobedience to God (Deuteronomy 4:1–4). In the New Testament teachings of Christ and the apostles, however, spiritual prosperity is promised for faith and obedience (John 4:13; 1 Peter 1:3–5), along with promises of hardships (Matt. 5:10–11; 2 Timothy 3:12; 1 Peter 4:12).

*–The Quest Study Bible*

### **Are there times when God hides from his people (23:8–9)?**

The Old Testament teaching is clear that God is present at all times and in all places (Psalms 139:7–12). This teaching is affirmed by Jesus when he promised to always be with us “to the very end of the age (Matthew 18:20).” However, there are times when (like Job) we may not

recognize God's work. Though we may go through times of confusion, suffering, and even times when God "feels" distant, we put our confidence in his promises and not in our feelings. He is present and available to us (Revelation 3:20)!

–Don Porter

## **Is it right to fear God's plans for us (23:14–15)?**

Job was in utter agony; he had no idea when all this suffering would end. It was natural for him to feel anxious about the future. But we need to balance Job's statement with the broader teaching in the Bible that God always has our best interest at heart (Jeremiah 29:11). Job himself discovered this when God restored and doubled everything Job had lost (42:12). We never need to fear God's ultimate plans for us.

–*The Quest Study Bible*

## **Does this mean that there is more to God and his works than what we see (26:14)?**

Absolutely! All we have seen and understood of God (through his works in creation and our lives) is but a mere "whisper" of who he is, what he has done, and what he is doing. Although Job's friends criticized him about his inability to understand the mysteries of God (for example, 11:7–9), Job reminds them (and us) that their understanding is limited.

–Don Porter

## **Is it unjust for God to allow "the righteous" to suffer (27:2)?**

We have little difficulty agreeing that God never does wrong—until tragedy comes into our lives. Then we may begin to ask ourselves what we have done wrong, or we may even question God's goodness. Deep down we know that neither question is right. So Job too emphatically denied either alternative. He was throwing the mystery into God's lap, as it were, and leaving it there. Here at the very heart of the problem of evil, the book of Job lays the theological foundation for an answer that Job's faith anticipates but which Job did not fully know. God, the Sovereign and therefore responsible Creator, would himself in the person of his eternal Son solve this human dilemma by bearing the penalty of the sins of humankind, thus showing himself to be both just and the justifier (vindicator) of all who trust in him (Romans 3:26).

–*NIV Bible Commentary*

## **Is it okay to pray against your enemies (27:7)?**

Not every decision made by people in the Bible is intended to be an example for us to follow. Jesus taught that we are to love our enemies and to pray for them (Matthew 5:44). This is perhaps one of the greatest challenges of the Bible – to pray God’s blessings upon the very people who have harmed us. This prayer reminds us that God’s eternal purposes in the lives of people are always greater than our earthly lives. Such prayers of blessing also enables us to let go of our own bitterness and reach out to our enemies with expressions of God’s love.

–Don Porter

## **What did Elihu say different from the others (32:14)?**

Like the others, Elihu believed that Job was suffering for some wrong that he committed. However, Elihu, unlike the others, makes concessions for God’s mercy. If Job would only take responsibility for whatever brought these difficulties upon him, then he would find grace. Contrary to Eliphaz, Elihu believed that a supernatural mediator could speak on Job’s behalf.

–*The Quest Study Bible*

## **In what ways was Job “wrong” (33:12)?**

Certainly Job’s perception of God as his enemy (see verses 10; 13:24; 19:11) is wrong, but Elihu is also offended by what he considers Job’s claim to purity (see verse 9). Job, however, had never claimed to be “pure and without sin,” though some of his words were also understood that way by Eliphaz (see 15:14–16). Job admits being a sinner (7:21; 13:26) but disclaims the outrageous sins for which he thinks he is being punished. His complaints about God’s silence (see verse 13) are also an offense to Elihu. But he imputes to Job the blanket statement that God never speaks to man, whereas Job’s point is that God is silent in his present experience.

–*The NIV Study Bible Notes*

## **How does God warn us against doing wrong (33:16–17)?**

Jesus taught that one role of the Holy Spirit was to convict those who contemplate doing wrong (John 16:8). The apostle Paul says that God has placed a knowledge of himself in every human being (Romans 1:19–20). Because people are created in the image of God, each person knows the difference between right and wrong, even if they have never read a word in the Bible.

## **Had Job condemned God (40:8)?**

Yes, on at least two counts. First he felt that God had wronged him by allowing him to suffer without cause (19:6). But Job also felt that God had refused him the chance to be vindicated. Job wanted to have his day in court and accused God of denying him that privilege.

*–The Quest Study Bible*

## **Why is it that Job is commended and his counselors rebuked (42:7–9)?**

Despite Job's mistakes in word and attitude while he suffered, he is now commended and the counselors are rebuked. Why? Because even in his rage, even when he challenged God, he was determined to speak honestly before him. The counselors, on the other hand, mouthed many correct and often beautiful creedal statements, but without living knowledge of the God they claimed to honor. Job spoke to God; they only spoke about God. Even worse, their spiritual arrogance caused them to claim knowledge they did not possess. They presumed to know why Job was suffering.

*–The NIV Bible Commentary*