

Job in the Furnace of Affliction: Part II

This article is a continuation of Part I

Written by: Dr. Eddie Bhawanie

God “delivers the poor in their affliction . . .” (Job 36:15a)

God, Almighty Reveals Himself and Speaks to Job (Chapters 38-42)

Through those painful ordeals, Job wanted an audience with God and he got it, though not exactly as he had anticipated: “Oh that one would hear me! Behold, my desire is, that the Almighty would answer me, and that mine adversary had written in a book” (31:35). The Almighty, answered Job, and directed His speech to him in the form of several, straight questions. Job was charged with: (i) the blackness of ignorance and presumption in what he said: “*Who is this that darkens counsel thus by words without knowledge?*” (38:2), and (ii) Job was challenged to give proof of his knowledge as to his inquiries into God’s divine counsels: “*Gird up now thy loins like a man: I will demand of thee, and answer Me*” (38:3). Job was now on trial, not God! The just Judge of all the earth commenced His interrogation of Job. ***How did God answer Job? He answered by showing His sovereignty, and His dominion over all of creation.***

The questions of interrogation, The Creator of the universe, the infinite-personal, living God, *put* to Job were designed to positively emphasize ***three*** great propositions: (i) God’s sovereignty in the *natural order* of the universe by creating it (38:1; cf, 40:5); (ii) God’s sovereignty in the *moral order* of the universe by ruling it according to His own fixed laws: (God has fixed laws of right and wrong revealed in the Bible, including the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20), God *alone* determines what is right and wrong, not men and women!) (Job 40:6 – 41:34); and (iii) God’s sovereignty over man’s actions, and man’s will—including Satan’s actions (see chapters 1 and 2).

God asks: “*Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?*” (38:4). This is a question which needs to be put to every unbeliever who questions the existence of God, and the origin of the universe. The Creator continued with His questions to Job: “*Who determined its dimensions, and precisely measured it (v. 5)? Into what were its foundation, or who laid the cornerstone (v. 6)?*” Job’s silence demonstrated his utter ignorance about the creation of the universe, and /or the fact that God is *infinite* and the fact that man is *finite*.

God continued to ask Job a series of questions about the morning light, about the origin of the sea, about the dawning of a new day, about the breadth of the earth, about the path wherein light travels, about the place of darkness, about the treasures of snow, and about the weather. The Lord continued to demonstrate how Job’s ignorance extended from the “deep” below to the heavens on high.

Job was introduced to God’s creation, and the awesome diversity of creatures; the Almighty was asking Job, “*Is man able to contend with Me?*” Job was invited to look at the animal kingdom: the wild ass, the wild ox, the ostrich, the horse, the grasshopper, and the bird. Job saw the earth’s diversity and beauty, and variety, and God pointed out: “Job

you have been wrong in your attitude and thinking toward your Maker” (see Chapter 38). In the end the evidence was overwhelming, and Job agreed in His conclusions (see Chapter 42).

It is God’s sovereign right to create, and He created with vast gradations in His universe. He created from the loftiest archangel, to the creeping reptiles. He created the birds, the ants, the fishes, the beasts, and all living things. God has assigned their various locations and adaptations to them—in view of where they live and breathe. The apostle Paul points out: “There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars, for one star differs from another in glory” (I Cor. 15:41). Why are there such amazing varieties and differences in His creation? Job had no answers, neither, do we!

We see in God’s creation a third of the earth unfit for human cultivation or habitation; we see marshes, deserts, and the ice-fields. We see the differences between the lion and the lamb, between the elephant and the mouse, and between the horse and the dog, between the hawk and the eagle, between the crocodile and the hippopotamus.

Why did He design beasts of burden –like mules and donkeys, while others enjoy a life of freedom –lions and tigers? Why did He create roses to have thorns, and lilies to grow without them? Why did He create one flower to emit a fragrant aroma and another to have none? Why did He create some plants, and trees to bear fruits and vegetables, and others that are poisonous?

In the human family, why does He give to one, five talents, to another, two talents, and yet to others, one talent? Why should it be a strange thing to us that some should be born black, and others white; some yellow, and some brown? Why should some be born idiots and others with high intellect? Why all these variations and differences?³ Job had no response, and he remained in dumb silence before the Creator!

Why such vast differences in God’s creation? The basic *truth* to us humans is this; the Creator of the universe is absolutely Sovereign. He executes His own will, performing His own pleasure, in His sovereign rule, and dominion over all of heaven and earth. His sovereign rule is *very objectionable to man*. Why? Because when we look below the surface, we see that we are rebels against God, and we have a sinful desire for autonomy –from Him. Almighty God declares concerning Himself and His Son, Christ in the creation process:

“By the Word of the LORD were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded and it stood fast” (Psalm 33:6, 8-9).

“But our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased” (Psalm 115:3)

“Thine, O Lord is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth in Thine; Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted above all. Both riches and honor come of Thee, and Thou reignest over all; and in Thine hand is power

³One of the best expositors for the argument for the Sovereignty of God has been Arthur W. Pink. See his work, *The Sovereignty of God*, (Baker Book House, 17th Edition, 1999), Ch., 2.

and might; and in Thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all . . .
.for all things come of Thee. . . .” (II Chronicles 29:11-13).

“The Lord hath made all things for Himself” (Proverb 16:4).

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without him was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:1-3).

“For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to Whom be glory for ever. Amen” (Romans 11:26).

“For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him, and for Him. And he is before all things, and by Him all things consist” (Colossians 1:16-17).

“Thou art worthy O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power: for thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created” (Rev. 4:11).

God, in His answer to Job, declared His sovereignty, and His supremacy, over all in heaven, and on earth. He declared Himself as the *only* God. To say that God is sovereign is to say that He is the Most High, Who has all authority (Matt. 28:18), doing according to His will in heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, so that none can stay His hand or say unto Him, “What doest Thou?” (Dan. 4:35).

Job Responded in Acts of Contrition (Chapter 42).

Job, in the furnace of afflictions, uttered statements of foolishness in the darkness of his ignorance –about God. His friends, the ash-heap philosophers, accused Job of transgressions and wickedness, and criticized him, and: “They argued that suffering is always sent by God as a direct consequence of sin and in proportion thereto.”⁴

As Job came to understand something of God’s unlimited power, knowledge, and dominion, Job responded thus: “I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes see Thee, wherefore, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:5-6). In his repentance there was the conviction of true guilt and sin, in the presence of the true and holy God.

Job came to *see* the demonstration of God’s holiness, and power in His creation and in His sustaining of the universe, and he *understood* it. And he contritely confessed, ‘that his words were filled with ignorance.’ He repented of his rebellion, and trusted in God again.

Job’s friends were greatly mortified, humiliated, and abased, and they came off disgraced. God told them plainly that they had *not spoken of Him the things that were right, like Job*, and that God’s anger was kindled against all three of them and that, they must make atonement for what they had said amiss. He ordered them to go to Job and beg

⁴Wayne Jackson, *The Book of Job*, (Quality Publishers, Abilene; Texas, 1983), p. 93.

him to offer their sacrifices, and pray for them. The friends had joined together in accusing Job wrongfully; now they are joined together in begging for his forgiveness. Those who have sinned together should repent together.

Conclusion

For many people the problem and the presence of *evil* and *suffering* is not exclusive of Christianity. In view of the existence of evil and suffering, many people call into question the very existence of God. “They don’t care about the abstract question of whether God exists or not—they refuse to trust or believe in any God who allows history and life to proceed as it is.”⁵

The Christian may not have an adequate explanation for the origin of evil and suffering in the world, but that is no reason for us to disregard the positive evidence for God. The Christian may not be able to explain away evil, but we are encouraged to beware of the influence of evil (1 Pet. 5:8-10).

The unbeliever not only has a problem explaining the origin of evil; he has a problem explaining the origin of good in this world as well. When Job was asked to explain how, could God create and sustain the universe, he was reduced to near stammering. He responded, “I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:6).

C. S. Lewis commented on evil and suffering: “Of all evils, pain only is sterilized or disinfected evil. . . . Thus that evil which God chiefly uses to produce the ‘complex good’ is most markedly disinfected, . . .”⁶

There is only One Book [The Bible], one philosophy, one religion, and one faith that offers a reasonable answer for the problem of pain and suffering, and ***that is the*** Christian worldview. However, outside the Christian worldview, in all the worlds of thought, whether the East, the West, the ancient, the modern, -only the Bible offers any reasonable explanation for evil and suffering!

Pain and suffering vex the human soul, but pain and suffering fit squarely in the apex of the Christian worldview. There is ***no other*** answer or explanation.

⁵Timothy Keller, *The Reason For God, Belief In An Age Of Skepticism*, (Dutton Press, New York, 2008), p. 22.

All Scriptures are taken from the Authorized King James Version

⁶C. S. Lewis, *The Complete C. S. Lewis Signature Classics*, (Published by HarperCollins, 2002), p. 619.