

THE WISDOM OF JOB

SEPTEMBER 3, 2018

Welcome to the Job, our series on the mystery of suffering. Today we are going to talk about Job as wisdom literature and why that makes a difference. If you are a new listener or new to our community, welcome. On Facebook there is a Bible Study Evangelista Discussion Community if you'd like to jump onto that particular location. We talk about the show, what we are learning, and things that we are having issues with. This is going to be a jam-packed show so I am going to jump right in.

I found a couple of quotes that I thought were interesting. One is from Victor Hugo, the man who wrote "Les Miserables." He says, "Tomorrow, if all literature were to be destroyed and it was left to me to retain one work only, I would save Job." The poet Tennyson said, "The greatest poem, whether of ancient or modern literature, is the book of Job." Job is typically placed as the first of five books commonly referred to as wisdom literature or the wisdom genre of the Old Testament. Those books would include Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Wisdom, and Sirach. Some of those are distinctly wisdom books and some are poetry and wisdom together. When we talk about the wisdom genre, we mean the meaning of life, and not from a philosophy point of view like the Greeks did, but by experience. Job is going to be the "experience" of someone, or more than one someone. It is both narrative and poetry. The book was a narrative in prose and it is a story, but it is also poetic. Most of the book is poetry.

Except for the last two in that list, Sirach and Wisdom, the wisdom genre of the Bible does not concern itself with these big Old Testament themes that we looked at in our last series: the law, the covenant, election, salvation, and particularly of the entire nation. Wisdom, instead, as a genre in the Bible, is interested in the individual and his destiny. There is a huge body of ancient wisdom literature that has nothing to do with the Israelite people at all. The Arabs, Egyptians, Mesopotamians, all of that wisdom literature sort of evolved together with Israel kind of sandwiched in between. If you look at those places on a map, Mesopotamia would be over at the Tigris and Euphrates over in Iraq and Iran, and Egypt is on the other side of Palestine in the African continent. Israel is right in between. That explains a whole lot of what happens in the Old Testament, because everything in the Old Testament, everything in that whole time period, had to do with Egypt. Egypt was so rich that all of the countries to the east wanted a piece of the action. All of their products, the farming, what was going on in that area, everyone wanted a piece of that and to get there they had to go through Palestine. That's really why Israel was the center of all of these conflicts between the Philistines and the Babylonians and the Assyrians. Interestingly, all of those places, those ancient peoples, had creation and flood stories. Gentile wisdom really came first, is what I am trying to say. It was like a manual and concerned professional skills and relationships and political sense, sort of a "wisdom and foolishness" kind of thing. Think of Aesop's Fables. That is kind of what the ancient Gentile wisdom was about. There is a word for that in Biblical scriptures that means "a popular saying."

Even in those Gentle places those sages were sort of opposite the prophets. The prophets were concerned with wisdom from a religious point of view, specifically the Israelite religion, the One God, the monotheism of Isreal. Isrealite wisdom develops, then, and it concerns the individual and personal destiny through the lens of this Israelite faith in one god. What was just wisdom and foolishness becomes virtue and vice, real religion versus false religion, right and wrong, sin and holiness. It

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becomes specifically religious. It also develops in the Bible, and that is part of why I am doing a show on just wisdom literature completely. If you don't understand where we are in the book of Job in the development of wisdom and in the development in the theology of suffering, then you are going to be somewhat lost. In Job 28 and also in Proverbs 8, Wisdom is presented in the Bible as distinct from God, and God is the only one who knows where Wisdom is, where she lies hidden. In Sirach 24, Wisdom comes from the mouth of God who sends her to Israel. In Wisdom 7 and 8 she is a particularly divine attribute but still distinct with him with a personality of her own, and she is always presented as female in the Bible, at least until the New Testament. These are all literary devices that show the mystery of God and they pave the way for the revelation of a plurality of persons in God. We see that specifically in the Gospel of John, the logos, or the Word, is in God but outside of God like divine wisdom. He, the word, Jesus, is given the title Wisdom of God in 1 Corinthians 4.

In the Old Testament wisdom literature, retribution is the meaning of suffering. Wisdom, then, equals happiness and vice equals ruin. God rewards the good and he punishes the wicked. That was the understanding of suffering throughout the Old Testament. That is why in John 9 you see the disciples come to Jesus and they say, "Who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind?" Jesus actually offers a new way to look at suffering. We will look at that as we go through the series.

What is interesting about Job is because it is sort of an experiential presentation of suffering, we see this experience of Job contradict the ancient wisdom up until that point. Job continues to say throughout the whole book that I am innocent, I have not sinned. So why is God punishing me? Why am I suffering? I am innocent. That is the real question of Job, and that is, I think, why it has lasted for so long in the consciousness of people of faith, and even those who are not of faith. You hear all the time of "the patience of Job." That's an interesting way to look at Job's trials, to ascribe to him patience, although he did have that. We are going to look at why that is the case throughout the series.

I really wanted to spend some time on the whole idea of wisdom literature because it is a huge key to understanding this whole book. Job does not give any sort of answer to that dilemma. "If God rewards the good and punishes the evil, then why am I suffering?", Job says. The majority of the whole book of Job is his friends telling him he must have sinned. They do that because that is the prevailing idea of that time about suffering. There was development throughout wisdom literature and part of it had to do with suffering and the meaning of it. Job kind of gives us a non-answer. It is interesting why. The Hebrew mentality to this point could not conceive of the survival of the spirit apart from the body, the flesh. The ancients believed that all creatures were breathing God's own breath in and out of their lungs, literally. They knew that God's breath gave life to creatures but the bodies of both humans and animals seemed to have life not only in the whole body but also in each individual part. The ancients saw that somehow the parts of living creatures - their hands and feet and elbows and knees and ears and all of that - were also living parts. Because they were keen observers, they asked themselves how this life-giving breath of God could actually spread to the parts of the body. Today we obviously know that we breathe oxygen into our lungs and it is absorbed into our bloodstream, and we know and understand that when we breathe out that carbon dioxide is pulled out of the blood and into the lungs and exhaled. The ancient people didn't have the benefit of that science so they wondered how this wind, this breath of God, penetrated through the "meat" of the body, through the muscles and bones and tissues and all the extremities. How does it do that after it enters the mouth and nose?

To answer that question they considered the experience of slaughtering animals. They had experience with that because of the sacrifices of the altar. They saw that when the windpipe and the two major

blood vessels on either side of the windpipe were cut, blood came out of that animal - a lot of blood - the breathing stopped, and the animal died. They also knew that to be true of people. In Baruch 2:17 it says, "Open your eyes, Lord, and look. The dead down in Sheol whose breath has been taken from their bodies are not the ones to give glory and recognition to the Lord." It gives me the shivers. From their observations they drew the conclusion that the breath of God being drawn in through the nose and mouth went down through the windpipe or throat, and they decided it must be in the throat that this breath of God gets absorbed by the blood flowing through those two big blood vessels on either side of the throat. From there, filled with God's lifegiving breath, they understood that breath was carried to all the parts of the body. They knew that no matter where you cut or pricked the skin of an animal or human, you would get blood. Because of this, they understood that God's lifegiving breath or his living breath was distributed by the blood to every possible place of both animals and humans.

I have a couple of pieces of housekeeping now. First I want to just say that I know we are all reeling right now over all that has been uncovered in the Church, over our sorrow for the victims, our trepidation about what is to come, but I want to encourage you to remain faithful to Christ no matter what. All of this back and forth is necessary to get to the truth, and we are not serving the pope or the bishops or the priests. We serve Christ and we go wherever he leads, and right now he is leading us into a painful but necessary cleansing, for each of us individually and for us collectively. I think it is going to get a whole lot worse before it gets better. Prudence and charity are on the side of withholding judgment and giving the benefit of the doubt, however big or small your doubt might be right now, to both sides, Pope Francis and Vigano. He is still our pope. He is the one the Holy Spirit gave us for whatever reason and for however short or long, and what we don't want is to be guilty of persecuting a holy man. We want to run those who have been proven guilty out of the church, but I also think it is prudent to fast and pray for a full investigation and house cleaning. I know that Our Lady is probably doing that right now and we need to add to that as much as we can through our prayers and penance and fasting. Maybe there is evidence of a coverup at the highest levels, but maybe not. Maybe it's a conspiracy to oust the pope and maybe it's not. Unless and until there is an investigation it is hard to say what the truth is, so let's not. Instead, let's keep praying for the Holy Father, all the bishops, and all the major players. The whole church needs prayer and fasting right now. I know you know that, but I wanted to make that point.

Also, I would like to shout out my Friends of the Show. I mentioned them last week in the email but I'd like to say thank you to all of you: Lisa, Laura, Katrina, Dawn, Carmella, Angelica, Patricia, Mary Catherine, Christine, Rosemary, Sierra, Laurie, Angela, Maria, Laurie S, and Elizabeth. Thank you all for being Friends of the Show, especially in times like what was going on with the website and all during the break, you guys helped me more than you will ever know. It's not a small thing. However big or small you think your contribution is, it's not small. If you can't give financially please continue to pray for the ministry and for my evangelization efforts. I appreciate that very much. I love you.

So, we are talking about how the ancients - the Israelites specifically - understood breath. They understood that everything animal and human breathed, and they thought that we breathed with the actual breath of God himself. What we know happens in the lungs - that absorption of oxygen into the blood, they thought happened in the throat. That is probably why the Hebrew word for throat also came to mean soul. That is, of course, the living core or being of a person. If you understand that then it also helps to explain why blood, either animal or human, was filled with taboos for ancient Judaism. We know from Leviticus that the life of a thing is in the blood. The laws concerning the treatment of blood were very specific and full of sanctions. You couldn't touch it and you certainly could not consume it. It was too sacred. It was sacred because it bears the breath of God in it. After

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an animal was butchered, either in a sacred way in the temple or in a butcher shop, all the blood had to be completely drained from the carcass before a Jewish person could eat the meat. The blood in either situation couldn't be drained into a sewer, it had to drain directly into the earth. We actually continue that practice in the sacristy of a church after the Eucharist. When they rinse the vessels out in a sacristy, all of that water drains directly into the earth. It does not go into the sewer system. All of these ritual practices were in place because of the Jewish believe that blood contains the lifegiving breath of God. Because of this belief that there could not be a survival of the spirit apart from the flesh of a thing, you can see why the ancients also understood that all retribution must happen in the body. They didn't understand that there could be a life of the spirit beyond the flesh. To them, all good was reward and all bad or suffering was punishment. That is why - they didn't have an understanding of the afterlife at all.

You can see, then, that wisdom grew over time throughout the Hebrew religion. God is rewarding the good and punishing the wicked precisely because they did not understand that there could be a separation of the flesh and the spirit where the spirit could continue to live. That also explains in the New Testament where the Pharisees and the Sadducees are at odds. Remember in Acts 23 when Paul pits the two of them together? He is going to try to make them fight so he can get out of the predicament that he is in. The Pharisees believe in a resurrection but the Sadducees didn't. In Acts 23 it says Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, and he cried out in the council "Brothers, I am a Pharisee and a son of Pharisees, with respect to the hope of the resurrection of the dead I am on trial." When he said this, dissention arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the assembly was divided, for the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection nor angels nor spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all. You can see that by this point there was an understanding somewhat of an afterlife, of the resurrection of the dead. That is part of why they believed in that too. They understood that the body had to be resurrected in order for the spirit to continue to live. The two couldn't be separated. We know, actually, that separation is part of original sin. It is part of the fall. The separation of body and spirit is a consequence of the fall. It was never ever actually supposed to be that way. I talk about that in my book "Fearless."

This retribution on earth was the prevailing theory. The only possible thing you could do is have this unquestioning faith in God. That was the only recourse. Israelite wisdom struggled with this prevailing theory pitted against a person's experience and his own destiny. That is why Job is in such conflict. He says "I haven't sinned. I've been so careful to not even let my children sin. How can this be happening to me? I am not at fault here." By the time we get to Ecclesiastes, we see that no man has a right to demand happiness of God as his due or as his right. I like to say this a lot: God is not obligated to us no matter how good we think we are, simply because of original sin. ALL men sin and fall short of the glory of God, as the book of Romans says.

In Sirach, he writes of the happiness of the wise but he is also haunted by death and he knows that somehow everything depends on that final hour, although he does not go so far as expressing those four last things -- Death, judgment, heaven, and hell -- because they did not have an understanding of that yet. In Sirach 11:26 it says, "It is a trifle for the Lord on the day someone dies to repay him as his conduct deserves. A moment's pleasures and adversities are forgotten. In a person's last hour his deeds will stand revealed. Call no one fortunate before his death. It is by his end that someone will be known." Shortly after Sirach, Daniel expresses faith in retribution after death along with faith in the resurrection of the body. This resurrection of the body idea is kind of new. He says in Daniel 12:13, "You, go away and rest and you will rise for your reward at the end of time." The Jews of Alexandria, in Northern Egypt, freed that Hebrew thought of its limitations through Plato's philosophy.

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He had this doctrine of an immortal soul. That is when in Wisdom 2 we see it says, “For God created human beings to be immortal. He made them as an image of his own nature.” Then in Wisdom 3 it says, “After death the faithful soul will enjoy unending happiness with God while the wicked receive punishment.” You can see that there is a split there. What happens before death and what happens after death do not necessarily agree. You could be great in life and die in sin and be punished, or you could live a life of wickedness and repent at the last minute and go to heaven. You can see that the two things are not mutually exclusive.

You can see the development of wisdom from these popular sayings, or the oral instructions, to Job and Wisdom. The popular sayings you see in Proverbs. We move from those Proverbs, which are sort of oral instructions, to Job and Wisdom in which these popular sayings, or these proverbs, become this great literary composition on the theme of suffering and wisdom. Also, the word “son” in Proverbs later on in Israelite history is retained and comes to mean “master who teaches a student.” It is not just father and son but also master and student relationship. The sages ran the schools, and so Wisdom later on became the privilege of the educated, the sages and the scribes. They end up being the teacher of the law that we find in the gospel times, the ones that came up against Jesus all of the time.

I mentioned in the very beginning that the wisdom books are also sometimes called the poetic books, because they are written in this poetic style in contrast, usually, to that narrative style of the other books. Job is unique because it has both. It is both poetry and wisdom in this sort of epic format. In the wisdom books, Job says how to suffer, Psalms say how to pray, Proverbs say how to act, Ecclesiastes says how to enjoy, the Song of Solomon says how to love, the book of Wisdom says how to prepare, and the book of Sirach says how to worship. All of this teaching was gradually dispensed to the Israelite people, and God was preparing them for the revelation of wisdom incarnate in the word, the Christ. In the Old Testament there is no greater compliment that the Bible could give than to ascribe to Solomon greater wisdom than that of the east and of Egypt and Mesopotamia, those Gentile sages. Yet in Matthew 12:42, Jesus said, “There is something greater than Solomon here.”

There is so much to this wisdom genre and I really wanted to give you a good background before we just plunged right into Job, because unless you understand the dilemma that Job is feeling then the book doesn't really make sense. I think that is part of our dilemma too when we suffer ourselves. We feel punished, at least I did. I've told this over and over. In everything I write I talk about that father wound and how because of my dad's legal background as a law enforcement officer, everything was built on retribution. Everything that was painful was a punishment and everything that was good was a reward. That is how I grew up and I always understood that to be the case with God too, which is not a true perspective. Jesus gives us that more true perspective later on. We will talk about that when we get into the book. It is important to understand that was Job's dilemma and the dilemma of Job's friends. What we are going to see in the book of Job is how God confronts that. You and I both know that every single person has a moment, a season of life, that is like Job's. We are confronted with the overwhelming pain of some event or some loss and we fall under it. God purposefully brings us to that confrontation. It's actually a confrontation with him. That is what he is leading Job to and that is what he leads us to. We'll look at that more when we get into the book.

Now that we've gotten through the genre, I'd like to talk about the title, the author, the date, and the theme of Job. It was the first of the books of that genre but it is not necessarily the first written. The title, like some of the other books in the Old Testament - Ruth, Joshua, Samuel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Tobit, Esther, Judith - bear the name of the hero of the book. Interestingly, I think, Job's name means

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“hated or persecuted” I don’t know if that would be a name I’d want to hang on somebody I loved, but that is what his name means. The author was probably not Job. This is one of the interesting things about the book, and in fact for us and our discussion in this time in our Church history, this is going to be very important. The author was a famous and probably historical person. He was a well-educated Israelite. He probably lived during the post-Babylonian exile period. We know that because of the dating. They used to think it was written back in the patriarchal times but it is more well understood now by contemporary Bible scholars that it was written later than they first thought, and part of the confusion probably involves the character of Job himself. He probably actually really did live. He probably was famous. We see his name mentioned in the book of Ezekiel 14:14-20. He is lifted as a paragon of virtue along with Noah and Daniel. Those were historical figures. He is also mentioned in 1 Samuel 1:1, Luke 1:5, and also James, Jesus’s brother, refers to Job as an example of perseverance. He probably was an actual person, but the author of the book of Job is not Job himself. Job would have lived back in the patriarchal times, and we know that because he offers sacrifices for his family, and they did that before there was a priesthood or a temple. We know, then, that the author wrote it in the post-exilic times after the exile to Babylon, we know that is when it was written, and we know it was probably about an actual person named Job.

He lived in a place called Uz. That is another historical detail that implies that he was a real person. He was also very rich, and rich in those days with flocks and herds and children and possessions and all of that meant that you were also very powerful. He would have been very influential and people would have viewed him, because he was wealthy, to be very holy. We see that he is actually presented to us through the narrative in the very beginning. The book starts with a narrative and then it turns into poetry all the way through the end. We see that he was very wealthy and we know where he lived. As I said, the date of the book is uncertain but we think probably around 400 to 500 BC because of its treatment of this innocence suffering. It is pretty developed. Job comes up against this dilemma, “Yes, I understand this is how we have always understood it but my experience is different.” You can see that at this particular time, around 400 to 500 BC, the sacred priestly and the secular wisdom kind of begin to merge. Job’s friends are Gentiles. His Gentile friends offer the old way of thinking about suffering, which is the whole reward and punishment idea. The book, of course, offers Job’s experience but it does not explain his experience. It kind of leaves it open ended because at that point there was not a more developed theology of suffering. We didn’t have that until Jesus came.

It was about the time of this Babylonian exile that this absorption in the destiny of the nation that had characterized the whole Old Testament history books and most of the Old Testament period, all of that focus on the national identity of the people started to give way to interest in an individual and his personal destiny, and that was really the subject of the wisdom literature of that time. It was that individual idea, what is good and what is bad and what is wise and what is foolish. The theme, then, of Job is that faith must remain when your understanding of suffering and the mysterious nature of suffering, and the mysterious nature of God’s providence - when it fails, we must continue in faith. Job as a book does not offer an exact explanation for all of that, but it does help to further or develop this theology of suffering that we come to in the New Testament under Christ. More light can be thrown on the mystery of suffering, especially innocent suffering, when God reveals an innocent suffering Messiah who dies and yet is resurrected unto glory specifically as a reward. His spirit and body are separated and yet he is resurrected wholly. His body and soul are reunited together. Like this suffering messiah who was an innocent sufferer, as we see in Isaiah 52, like him we can also suffer innocently, although all of us are guilty of sin and we deserve suffering. That is part of why we suffer at all. It is like a penance.

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I've said this before, too, but I grew up hearing that Jesus paid it all, so I don't have to offer penances because Jesus paid it all. Well, my question then was always, If he paid it all, why are you here? If he paid it all, earthly and eternal consequences, why are you still here suffering? Suffering is part of the payment for sin. We know that especially from the book of Romans from St. Paul, but also all the way through the Old Testament that was the way they understood it. They weren't wrong, it just had to develop. The people, their religion, and their understanding of God developed through time. God doesn't jerk us around and try to give it all to us at one time, individually or collectively.

We suffer here and we experience pain partly because we deserve it. We all sin and suffering is a consequence of sin. If you don't believe that then just run right out to the highway there and get in your car and do 120 mph and see if you don't get a ticket or have a wreck. There are consequences to sin, and there are consequences because sin brings forth death, as Paul says. Jesus paid the eternal payment because that is the part we couldn't pay. We can't offer an eternal sacrifice because we are earthly and not eternal, and every sacrifice we offer is going to be tainted with the sinfulness of our flesh. We cannot offer for ourselves an eternal sacrifice. Jesus had to do it for us, and he did do it for us. My point is that we might suffer innocently in our minds. We may think we don't deserve it and there are cases in which we don't. For instance, your child dies. Why does a child that is innocent get cancer and die? Why are their accidents? I'm not talking about that. I am talking about adults who have sinned.

All of us are guilty and all of us deserve suffering, but there is a sense in which the scope of our suffering is sometimes so great - and I speak of you, so many of you have suffered so much more deeply than I, and I want you to know throughout this series that I am not giving you any pat answers. Job didn't give it to us and God doesn't give it to us. Suffering is a great mystery, but the Bible does shed some light on it. That is what we are going to look at. I'm not going to try to feed you some sort of cotton candy answer for why you have suffered so deeply and so acutely. I would never try to do that. We all experience the pain of suffering. What we know from Jesus, because he did suffer innocently, is that if we offer our earthly sacrifice to his eternal sacrifice, we will receive a reward. In fact, we know that to be true because of two texts of St. Paul. He gives us the answer for why, sort of. He sort of gives Job, and by extension us, the answer to the Why of suffering. He says in Romans 8:18, "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing to the glory that is to be revealed to us." I have 6 different translations here and the Douay Rheims says, "I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us." The King James says, "I reckon the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." NAB says, "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed to us." The New Jerusalem says, "In my estimation, all that we suffer in the present time is nothing in comparison with the glory which is destined to be disclosed for us."

The saints all say that too. When they get this rapturous ecstatic vision of God, this beatitude, this little touch of bliss, they all say, "Let me suffer more." It is worth it, because the more you suffer and the more you are able to turn that over to God, the more of him that you receive. That is the glory and the blessing and the beatitude: God Himself. The more we are able to suffer not only on our own part - the saints tell us that we suffer on our own for a while because God is purifying us from sin, but at some point we begin to suffer redemptively for other people. It's no longer about us at all, but it is in order to bring salvation to others. That is why we offer penances to the Sacred Heart of Christ and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. We offer those because we want them to draw other people to themselves into that glory that we enjoy.

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St. Paul also says in Colossians 1:24, “Who, now rejoice in my sufferings for you and fill up those things that are wanting in the sufferings of Christ in my flesh or his body, which is the Church.” In the RSV, it says, “I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake.” Here is this redemptive suffering idea. “In my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body that is his Church.” He talks about his flesh, and he is talking about being able to suffer in his body for the sake of other people. There are other places that we believe that St. Paul was actually a stigmatic, that he would have had possibly the stigmata of Christ. He talks about bearing the wounds of Christ in his body. Here he says that he rejoices in his sufferings for the sake of us and in his flesh he completes what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body that is the Church. St. Paul is saying to us that when we offer our sufferings in union with Christ, they become redemptive both for us and for other people.

I don’t even know where I saw this. It may have been Melinda Bell, who is a friend of mine on Facebook, who posted a quote from St. Therese of Lisieux and she said, “I am not afraid to suffer. I used to be afraid that I would suffer in my body some long illness. Now I am not afraid. I can suffer for the rest of eternity if you want me to, Lord.” It’s because she got a taste of this sort of redemptive suffering for others. Maybe that is part of what was happening with Job. I don’t know. We’re going to see, possibly. This is how it applies to us and the contemporary experiences we are seeing in the Church right now: the suffering that others have inflicted on innocent people, and also the fact that we ourselves are suffering the humiliation of the Church, the priests and bishops, the good ones.

Remember that the author of Job is part of this remnant faithful after the Babylonian exile. God allowed that exile, that sacking of Jerusalem, because of Israel’s idolatry. They had begun to literally worship other gods, but for us, our attention is suddenly diverted from God himself and we start to pay attention to something else. Maybe it’s a job or a relationship or a child or an addiction - whatever, but eventually it gains more importance than our relationship with God and that relationship falls to the wayside. Maybe we leave off our prayer time or we stop praying our rosary or we stop going to Adoration. Something falls to the wayside. God allowed that Babylonian exile because of Israel’s idolatry. For a Hebrew like the author of Job to kind of lay aside for a little while the thought that his country’s traditions - the law, the prophets, the covenant of Sinai, the sanctuary and altar, all of that - and return in writing his poem to this primitive faith of the early patriarchs is not some sort of abdication of his faith. He is saying something. They apostatized and in so doing they fell into slavery into the Babylonians. Israel needed to begin afresh. They needed their faith to be stripped of this observance of the outer part and they needed to begin to rely again on God himself rather than the practice of their religion. In a way God was stripping away everything that wasn’t important to reveal a simpler, realer faith in him, the kind of faith that Job had. The author of Job, during the time of the exile, is looking back to this pure faith of Job and he is lifting Job’s faith up for us to see, and not just us. Primarily he is concerned with his own people. He is saying to his own people “After this exile, we need a fresh faith. We need a simpler faith.”

For us, the irony is that the author of Job seems to be explaining to his audience how this Babylonian catastrophe could have happened to good people too. Why is it that the faithful remnant suffered with the bad? Why is it that they get caught up in the painful judgment of that exile and they were run out of their country and their temple sacked and they enslaved. Why is it that happens, that the good and bad are judged alike simply because of the association with God’s people? I think this crisis in our Church is exactly why the Holy Spirit guided us to this study of Job after some preparatory work. I always thought that Job was the author and turns out not to be. I think that is part of why the Holy Spirit guided us to this study. He is guiding us away from this contemplation of our Church’s catastrophe to that of individual faith and purity, because that is what wisdom literature does. It is

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concerned with the individual, the personal, but then it brings us back to that collective view just like the author of Job seems to be doing. He is offering Job as a man of simple faith, pure faith, and yet he is writing to this collective audience of his people that have been in exile to Babylon.

How faithful are we as the American Catholic Church? It seems as though we are not very faithful at all. How pure is my personal faith really? Where have these habits that used to animate my spiritual life, where have they fallen away? How can I get them back a little at a time? Do I pray every single day? Do I practice my Love The Word™? Am I disciplined? I am not dogpiling, and neither is Job. Times are busy, but what the author of Job and the Holy Spirit are trying to say to us is the times are evil. It is SO important that we go back to being serious about our faith in God. I think that we are going to find in this series a great deal of hope in these worrisome times when all of this upheaval is occurring. It seems to me that the Holy Spirit is really, first of all, confronting us with the reality of suffering, and the depth of it and the evil of it. When we experience suffering we understand that something is wrong, something is out of whack. Why is that? Is it my fault? Sometimes it is, and probably that is part of what we are looking at. Where is my suffering a direct or indirect result of my own sin? I need to get with the Holy Spirit and I need to go to Adoration and I need to find out. Lord, how is this related? Is it related to something I have done or have not done? And I need to allow him to tell me the truth about that, and if the truth is that it is not our fault at all and we've had nothing to do with it - and sometimes that is the case - how can I offer this suffering for the good of others and how can it be redemptive? Then maybe we contemplate on how that is even possible, all that Jesus suffered and paid and went through in order to make it possible for us to be able to offer our own sufferings in union with his. Maybe we contemplate the Blessed Mother and all she suffered. Surely if anyone suffered simply because of redemption it was her, as a purely human being. Maybe that is part of what we are being called to do. I think so. I think as we get into the book we are going to see some interesting things.

I have sort of changed my focus a little bit. I started out thinking we were looking at the mystery of suffering but I think part of what we are going to see is that suffering is evil and it was not something that was ever intended for us. We are going to have a really close look at evil throughout the book of Job too.

Thank you for joining me for the first show of the series. I look forward to the rest. I appreciate you! Jump onto the Facebook page so you can keep up with updates, and also maybe to the Bible Study Evangelista Discussion Community so that we can discuss the shows. God with God, Dear One.

