

Job Chapters 22-24 - John Karmelich

I must admit, I'm tired of the endless debate. If you've been with me through the book of Job, then you know it's chapter after chapter of a long debate. The good news is we're at the end of it! This is my last lesson on the debate. The next lesson is a long wrap-up speech by Job. So why study all this? Most of this book is basically a back and forth between three people telling Job he must have sinned horribly as that's the only logical explanation why he's suffering so much! His endless response is in effect, "No it is not that! I don't know why God's allowing this to occur, but I must accept it!" Job ponders in effect, "When I get to heaven maybe then He'll explain it to me!" The good news is God Himself gives a long speech to end this book. Then all Job could say is, "Sorry I questioned why this happened. I'll just shut up now so you (God) can decide what's best!" That leads me to the question, why should we study this third and final round of the debate when we already get all of that? I'd argue the focus is on in this final section is, "Does God react to what we do in this life?" This isn't about eternal judgement, just, "Is God obligated to interfere in our affairs?" as the main question of this final section of the debate!

The first thing I always say is "God is God", meaning He can intercede anytime and anywhere that He wants. I never bought the argument that we must strain to get God to react to our situation! He is God and we're not, so if He wants our attention, He'll get it. Obviously, I believe God answers our prayers, but He's not obligated to. I've always argued the best way to get God to react to us is total surrender of a situation to whatever is His will! I believe God created us to glorify Him, so He does interfere when it is His will to do so! He finds a way to make our lives go the way He desires! A mentor of mine did teach me, "God rarely guides us the way we should go, but He often sends a "rescue rope" to pull us in the direction He wants us to go".

As most of you know, I always pray about what book to teach next. God does not, "Part the Red Sea" and says out loud "Here's Job, get going!" He just somehow makes it obvious to me that's what is next and I'm teaching the bible, so I just go at it! For what it's worth my second "go around" of teaching the whole bible has begun with focusing on the books I struggled with the most! Besides, I suffered a bad accident when I started on this book (recovered now), that was God's way to say, Job is it, get moving! God finds ways to communicate His will, even if its subtle. We can ask for His guidance, but He is not under any obligation to interfere in our lives because we asked Him.

My final general thought before I return to Job is often God will go silent on us. It is those times when we feel like our prayers are "bouncing off the ceiling" and He's not reacting! I've come to accept those times as moments when God is saying, "John, do you trust me now, even through this?" In effect, that is what Job has to endure through this whole trial. To state it again, Job is feeling like his prayers here are bouncing off the ceiling! Believe it or not, that idea is the key to the opening argument and rebuttal of this third round of the debate. Let me explain:

Chapter 22 returns us to a man named Eliphaz. This will be his third and final speech. After round 3's end none of three men will speak again. The only epilogue coming up is God told Job what these three men said isn't right and God asks Job to pray for them. (That issue is for Job to forgive!) Meanwhile in Chapter 22, Eliphaz is in effect tired of telling Job directly to confess some sin. He decides to try a new tactic by asking, "What good does it do to try to please God?" The implication is God is not under any obligation to answer if one is right or wrong (that's true). Again, a lot of what these three men say isn't wrong it just doesn't apply to Job's situation! Eliphaz will next state a handful of "trumped up" charges against Job as if to say, "OK, you won't admit to any particular sin, choose from my list!" You must be

guilty of one of these! Most people I know deal with false charges made against them at some point in their life. One answer is to ask, "what's your evidence" or "consider the source of the accusation!" My point is when we deal with situations like that, God is often silent. As I love to say, "Pray like God will intervene and then make the best decisions we can given the information we have in front of us!"

Eliphaz ends his "false charges" with a statement in Verse 21 of "agree with God (about your sins) and you will be at peace with Him". That flies in the face of his argument that God doesn't get involved in man's affairs. Eliphaz's final argument is in effect, "Confess your sin and you'll be at peace with God". Now think about what I said earlier that most of us face false charges at some point in life. Then we get the "just confess it and we can move on" speech! Just saying Job's dealing with something many of us must deal with as well, but often not to this extreme!

Chapter 23 opens with Job asking, "Where is God"? Job's reply in effect is what makes you think He is under any obligation to answer false charges? Job makes a mistake of asking if God responded, isn't it prove I'm right? When He speaks later in the book Job apologizes for questioning God as again, God's going to do what He wants when He wants! The rest of Chapter 23 is Job stating God is not under any obligation to answer him! Job says He's terrified of God's wrath (as all of us should be), but the point is Job knows he didn't commit any great sin for why he's suffering, so why should he defend himself over Eliphaz's false charges? Job says he's not going to remain silent, as he has a right to defend himself for those false charge even if God's silent. It comes back to what I said earlier, make the best decisions we can with the information we have! Since God isn't answering, Job's doing the best that he can, with the situation in front of him!

In Chapter 24 Job goes on a rant about the fact that some people commit crimes (sins) and seem to get away with it! Obviously, God will judge eternally but it does not mean God is obligated to interfere in our lifetime! His point is lots of suffering does occur in this world, and it doesn't mean God is judging all that sin on the spot! Job's response to Eliphaz is that one shouldn't interpret injustice as God letting people get away with sin! It's the classic case of God responding to injustice by asking us, "What is it you (us) doing about it as opposed to crying out to me?" Of course, people get away with stuff in this lifetime, but it should not stop us from wanting to do the right thing when we can!

In summary Job is saying God is in charge, He can do what He wants, react when He wants and we're not at liberty to assume any punishment or lack of punishment is God reacting to a situation. Our job as believers is when necessary to stand up for what's right even if we suffer for it!

Assume we believe that, now what? We could face being accused of wrongdoing and must deal with it. Yes I believe we should pray over it, but again, He's under no obligation to judge actions before we get to heaven! All we can do is the best we can with the situation in front of us. The reason all of this is in the bible is to remind us of that truth, that God does what He wants when He wants. Yes, I believe God wants to guide our lives and often does. At the same time, He goes silent at times if for no other reason than for us to learn to trust Him during those silent times.

With that said, the good news is we only have one lesson left of this debate (next one). Hope all this is helpful. Time to wrap it up for the week!

If you liked this study, I wrote a more detailed account some years back with the links on this web site! Thanks for reading this!