

## Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

### Fourth Quarter 2016: *The Book of Job*

#### Lesson 4 “God *and* Human Suffering”

#### Read for this week’s study

Romans 1:18–20; Job 12:7–10; Revelation 4:11; Colossians 1:16, 17; Matthew 6:34; Job 10:8–12; Romans 3:1–4.

#### Memory Text

“ ‘Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble’ ” (Matthew 6:34, NKJV).

#### Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. God in Nature
- III. Nothing Came From Itself
- IV. The Earliest of Books
- V. The Dilemma
- VI. Theodicy
- VII. Further Study

#### Questions and Notes for Consideration

##### Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “One of the key themes of Job, human suffering, is universal. It’s not limited to any one people or time. Jew or Gentile, we all know something of Job’s woes, of the pain of existence in a fallen world. However unique his pain, Job represents us all in our sufferings.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. “Read Job 12:7–10. How do the words here reflect the idea presented in Romans 1:18–20? Here, too, we are told that the reality of God is seen in the created world. Though especially in its fallen state, nature doesn’t reveal the full character of God, it certainly reveals His creative power and aspects of His goodness, as well.” (Sunday’s lesson)
3. “There’s been one perennial problem that many have used through the ages to justify their disbelief, and that is the problem of human suffering and evil. How can God be all-good, all-loving, and all-powerful, and evil exist? This has been and remains a stumbling block to many. And also, if we are honest, what believer in God, what person who has tasted and experienced the reality of God and His love hasn’t struggled at times with that question?” (Tuesday’s lesson)

4. “However understandable the argument from evil against the existence of God, in light of the Scriptures it makes no sense. Though the Bible teaches the reality of an all-knowing, all-powerful, all-loving God, it also teaches the reality of evil, of human suffering, and woe. Evil is not an excuse to disbelieve in God. In fact, a cursory reading of the book of Job shows that even amid his utter despondency, Job never questioned the existence of God. The question instead, and a valid one, is why are these things happening to him?” (Tuesday’s lesson)
5. “The question that Job is wrestling with is the same one that most believers in God have wrestled with and still do wrestle with: If God exists, a good and loving God, why do humans suffer the things that they do? Why do even ‘good’ people, such as Job, go through calamities and trials that so often seem to produce nothing of value? Again, if the universe were godless, the answer would be that this is simply what it means to live in a purely materialistic cosmos in which human beings are merely the accidental by-products of atoms and molecules. Job knew better than that. We do too; hence, the dilemma.” (Wednesday’s lesson)
6. The lesson ends on Theodicy, quoting Romans 3:1-4. “Quoting Psalm 51:4, Paul talks about how the Lord Himself will ‘be justified in your words and will prevail when you are judged’ (Rom. 3:4, NET). The idea being presented is a motif that appears in various places in the Scriptures. It’s called theodicy, and it is the question of understanding the goodness of God in the face of evil. [...] In fact, the whole great controversy itself is really a theodicy. Before humans, before angels, before the whole universe, the goodness of God will be revealed despite the evil that unfolds in the world.” (Thursday’s lesson)
7. The Greek of Romans 3:4 says that God “will be justified in your words and will prevail when you will be judged”. Paul uses future passive (or medium) tense. The judgment is in the future and God puts Himself on trial. Why would God do that?
8. It is certainly true that “amid trials, we need to remember that there’s a bigger picture that we often don’t see or understand” (Friday; Lesson 3). Surely understanding plays an important role in the whole process of God dealing with the problem of evil. However, Job’s friends were the most useful to him when “they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was.” (2:13) Imagine sitting with someone in silence for seven days and seven nights!
9. This powerful act (Job 2:13) may be the greatest example in all Scripture of what Paul commands to the church—“Mourn with those who mourn” (Romans 12:15).
10. Paul doesn’t say, “Fix them.” He doesn’t say, “Give them lots of wise advice.” He doesn’t say, “Get them on the right track.” He says, “Mourn with them.” Interestingly enough, after the seven days were over, Job’s friends spoke a lot and they got in trouble for it. Their words were no help. But their silence was brilliant. Their silence was the greatest gift for Job.

11. Do you have friends who spend time with you when trouble comes? We can build those kinds of relationships now—little communities of people who do for each other what that small community did for Job. In Jesus' church, nobody ought to have to sit on the ash heap by themselves!

### Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Nature was supposed to be a great revelation of God. Did you every watch a hummingbird? And if you have the peace to watch it for awhile, what do you think of a God who would make that little creature? And those colors are incredible!

Once in awhile, when our children were still small, a bird would build a nest near a window where we could see. That's the most marvelous thing to watch! And then the little eggs—I've always been fascinated by birds' eggs, and the way the mother looks after them. Of course, then like as not a scrub jay would come and steal the eggs or a cat would kill the bird. Well, that's also part of the scene.

But think of a God who would create the hummingbird to come and get nectar from the bird of paradise. We had some that bloomed right outside our breakfast nook window. And you know how they open? Utterly marvelous! Their color, and then the little blue part, and then the next section, and another blue part. Did you ever try to pull one of those open prematurely? They just don't go right, do they? And yet when they're ready, the case opens just enough to let the next section out. Do you see God engineering that thing? Ah, it speaks marvelously of our God. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in All 66 – Ecclesiastes & Song of Solomon*, recorded January, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

\*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1984:

<http://pkp.cc/31MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/32MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Do you have a conviction as to who wrote Job? There is a tradition that Moses wrote Job, and Ellen White accepted that without discussing it in detail. In *Signs of the Times*, February 19, 1880, she wrote that Moses was the author of the book of Job, and that's quoted in the *SDA Bible Commentary*. However, if we didn't know who wrote it, the message is still there. Some have even said, "Supposing it's just a literary representation, there really wasn't a real Job?" Well, the message would still come through.

Now, I like to take a real Job, and I love the thought that Moses wrote it. But you can't diminish the meaning, the message of the book by those other two options, so all's well. I love the thought, though, that the one who was instrumental in leading Israel through the wilderness

knew God very well if he was able to write the book of Job. There were times when Moses felt very much alone and his faith was very sorely tried, and maybe he had met Job during the forty years he was with the sheep. I wish we knew more about it. But it isn't essential that we do. But it would help us understand perhaps why Moses could be such a friend of God as Job was.

{Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in All 66 – Esther & Job*, recorded March, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

\*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1984:

<http://pkp.cc/25MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/26MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Lou: “Why wasn't the conflict ended with Christ's victory at the cross and his resurrection? Why has pain and suffering gone on since then?” This question has come up before, but another person wanted to know.

Graham: The fact that it keeps coming up suggests how important it is, and we have an evening coming up, “God Waits for His Children to Grow Up.” In the narrower, more legal view, if it's done at the cross, why wait any longer? In the larger, great controversy view, there are terrible events to occur at the end, and there will need to be a generation— not of children, or even “dear idiots” of Galatia. There needs to be a group of Jobs who are so grown up and settled into the truth, that like Paul they could say, “If even an angel from Heaven should come with a different gospel,” and there he is, pretending to be Christ, “he is wrong and we will not believe it.” God in mercy waits. Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #16 with Lou Venden, “God's Last Pleading With His Children” recorded May, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/16MMCAG>

But if you want to carry this back to the beginning, would you say that when Lucifer began the rebellion against God, he didn't know what he was doing? He knew full well what he was doing. Why didn't God smite him on the spot? Wouldn't that have been good administration? Think of all the suffering that would have spared the universe and spared God himself. Why didn't God, when he saw that thing developing, say, “Think what damage this will do! Far more than a man picking up a few sticks on Sabbath. I will eliminate Lucifer.”

And by the way, if he had eliminated all memory of Lucifer, nobody would have known the difference. No one would have known but God. Then why didn't he do that? I mean, what an attractive option! As soon as he saw the seeds of disaffection developing in Lucifer, he could just eliminate him. And then lest some of us be made afraid by his doing this, he could reach

into our minds and blot out the memory, just as many people believe God is going to blot out all memory of everything unpleasant. Then he could blot out all memory of this thing, and the universe would be at peace. And if sin should arise again, every time it arose he could blot out the individual and then blot out all memory of the individual. God could do that ad infinitum, couldn't he? All we know is, he didn't choose to do that. What he chose to do cost him infinitely. He would rather use another method. And he's gone on record as using another method. So even though God could have kept it secret from us all, he wants us to know he does not manipulate us at all. He wins our trust in some other way. And that he uses this other way is very winsome about God. How trustworthy he is, that he didn't take that option! {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Ecclesiastes & Song of Solomon, recorded January, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

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There are some who say, "There is no need to reveal the righteousness of God. That's a given. All we need are the methods and the steps he's used to set us right." But then they use the wrong methods. It's by presenting the truth about God. "This is what God is like." And you use all sixty-six books for that. Look at all the evidence as to what God is like. Does he want to be served from fear? What does he do to his wayward children? We have to explain that. What about his wrath, and the destruction of the wicked? He has to explain that in order to win us back to trust, and the kind of obedience that God desires, that springs not from fear, or law, but from love, trust, and admiration. God's way is to tell the truth about himself. But God has been judged as being untrue and unrighteous. And Paul says, "God, may you be shown to be right in what you have said and win your case when you take it into court." "When thou art judged" in the Greek can be translated "when you take it into court".

Did anyone drag God into court? Or would he have to take his own case into court? If God's in court, he took himself there. Nobody has power to drag him into court. So I love the translation "and win your case when you take it into court." Has God won his case? Do you see the court, by the way? Daniel 7— A hundred million watch when the court sits in judgment and the books are opened. How about in Job? Is not God on trial there? Isn't he accused of being untrustworthy, in Job? Think of other places. The universe has been judging God. He has invited his children to examine and investigate his character and his government, for he has been accused. In the Garden of Eden he was accused, and think of other places. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Romans, recorded May, 1982,

Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

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### **Further Study with Ellen White**

The lofty trees, the lovely birds caroling forth their happy songs to their Creator, speak to their senses of the goodness, mercy, and benevolence of God. Every leaf and flower with their varied tints, perfuming the air, teach them that God is love. All that is good and lovely and beautiful in this world speaks to them of the love of our heavenly Father. The character of God they may discern in His created works. {CG 54.1}

From the solemn roll of the deep-toned thunder and old ocean's ceaseless roar, to the glad songs that make the forests vocal with melody, nature's ten thousand voices speak His praise. In earth and sea and sky, with their marvelous tint and color, varying in gorgeous contrast or blended in harmony, we behold His glory. The everlasting hills tell of His power. The trees that wave their green banners in the sunlight and the flowers in their delicate beauty point to their Creator. The living green that carpets the brown earth tells of God's care for the humblest of His creatures. The caves of the sea and the depths of the earth reveal His treasures. He who placed the pearls in the ocean and the amethyst and chrysolite among the rocks is a lover of the beautiful. The sun rising in the heavens is a representative of Him who is the life and light of all that He has made. All the brightness and beauty that adorn the earth and light up the heavens speak of God. {CT 54.2}

God calls upon His creatures to turn their attention from the confusion and perplexity around them and admire His handiwork. As we study His works, angels from heaven will be by our side to enlighten our minds and guard them from Satan's deceptions. {CT 456.4}

In the beginning, God was revealed in all the works of creation. It was Christ that spread the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth. It was His hand that hung the worlds in space, and fashioned the flowers of the field. "His strength setteth fast the mountains." "The sea is His, and He made it." Psalm 65:6; 95:5. It was He that filled the earth with beauty, and the air with song. And upon all things in earth, and air, and sky, He wrote the message of the Father's love. {DA 20.1}

Now sin has marred God's perfect work, yet that handwriting remains. Even now all created things declare the glory of His excellence. There is nothing, save the selfish heart of man, that lives unto itself. No bird that cleaves the air, no animal that moves upon the ground, but ministers to some other life. There is no leaf of the forest, or lowly blade of grass, but has its

ministry. Every tree and shrub and leaf pours forth that element of life without which neither man nor animal could live; and man and animal, in turn, minister to the life of tree and shrub and leaf. The flowers breathe fragrance and unfold their beauty in blessing to the world. The sun sheds its light to gladden a thousand worlds. The ocean, itself the source of all our springs and fountains, receives the streams from every land, but takes to give. The mists ascending from its bosom fall in showers to water the earth, that it may bring forth and bud. {DA 20.2}

While on earth, the Redeemer of the world sought to make his lessons of instruction plain and simple, that all might comprehend them; and can we be surprised that he should choose the open air as his sanctuary, that he should desire to be surrounded by the works of his creation? True, he taught in the synagogues, but the largest part of his work was done, the greatest number of his lessons were given, in the open air. He had special reasons for resorting to the groves and the seaside. He could there have a commanding view of the landscape, and make use of objects and scenes with which those in humble life were familiar. The things which his own hand had made he took as his lesson book. He saw in them more than finite minds could comprehend. The birds, caroling forth their songs without a care, the flowers of the valley glowing in their beauty, the lily that reposed in its purity on the bosom of the lake, the lofty trees, the cultivated land, the waving grain, the barren soil, the tree that bore no fruit, the everlasting hills, the bubbling stream, the setting sun, tinting and gilding the heavens,—all these he employed to impress his hearers with divine truth. He connected the work of God's finger in the heavens and upon the earth with the word of life. From these he drew his lessons of spiritual instruction. He would pluck the lilies, the flowers of the valley, and place them in the hands of the little children, as instructors to proclaim the truth of his word. {YI March 24, 1898, par. 7}

The things of nature that we now behold give us but a faint conception of Eden's glory. Sin has marred earth's beauty; on all things may be seen traces of the work of evil. Yet much that is beautiful remains. Nature testifies that One infinite in power, great in goodness, mercy, and love, created the earth, and filled it with life and gladness. Even in their blighted state, all things reveal the handiwork of the great Master Artist. Wherever we turn, we may hear the voice of God, and see evidences of His goodness. {MH 411.1}

The Bible shows us God in His high and holy place, not in a state of inactivity, not in silence and solitude, but surrounded by ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of holy beings, all waiting to do His will. Through these messengers He is in active communication with every part of His dominion. By His Spirit He is everywhere present. Through the agency of His Spirit and His angels He ministers to the children of men. {MH 417.2}

The holy pair were not only children under the fatherly care of God, but students receiving instruction from the all-wise Creator. They were visited by angels, and were granted communion with their Maker, with no obscuring veil between. . . . The mysteries of the visible

universe—"the wondrous works of him who is perfect in knowledge" —afforded them an exhaustless source of instruction and delight. The laws and operations of nature, which have engaged men's study for six thousand years, were opened to their minds by the infinite Framer and Upholder of all. They held converse with leaf and flower and tree, gathering from each the secrets of its life. With every living creature, from the mighty leviathan that playeth among the waters, to the insect mote that floats in the sunbeam, Adam was familiar. He had given to each its name, and he was acquainted with the nature and habits of all. God's glory in the heavens, the innumerable worlds in their orderly revolutions, "the balancings of the clouds," the mysteries of light and sound, of day and night,—all were open to the study of our first parents. {SD 7.3}

**Recommended Reading:**

*The Ministry of Healing* Chapter 35 – "A True Knowledge of God"

*Patriarchs and Prophets* Chapter 2 – "The Creation"

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