

## **JOB'S FIRST DEBATE ON SUFFERING**

We are studying the Book of Job as a seven-act play. We will study selective passages from each of the following seven acts.

- Act 1 - Spiritual Testing (Job 1-2)
- Act 2 – Suffering for Christ (Job 3)
- **Act 3 – First Debate of Suffering (Job 4-14)**
- Act 4 – Second Debate of Suffering (Job 15-21)
- Act 5 – Third Debate of Suffering (Job 22-31)
- Act 6 – Special Speeches on Suffering (Job 32-41)
- Act 7 – Spiritual Restoration from Suffering (Job 42)

The cast for Acts 3, 4, 5 are introduced in Job 2:11-13 as the three best friends of Job: Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. After being informed of Job's situation, they all came to visit Job to offer their sympathy. Upon arriving they could hardly recognize him. They wept aloud, tore their robes, sprinkled dust on their heads, and sat on the ground without speaking a word for seven days and nights because of their sense of the enormity of Job's suffering.

After these seven days and nights, Job broke the silence by cursing the day of his birth (Job 3 / Act 2). This led to each of them giving their opinion of the cause and solution to Job's suffering and his response. It will be covered in the three debates on Job's suffering in Acts 3, 4, and 5.

**Today's lesson will study seven aspects of the First Debate on Job's Suffering.  
However, it will only study the three friend's opinion and not Job's response.  
Job's response will be studied next week.**

### **1. The Scriptural order of the First Debate on Job's suffering will establish the order for all three debates.**

- Eliphaz 's opinion (chs.4-5)      Job's response (chs. 6-7)
- Bildad opinion (ch.8)      Job's response (chs.9-10)
- Zophar's opinion (ch.11)      Job's response (chs.12-14)

This order will be followed in all three debates except for the third debate. In the third debate (Act 5), Zophar will not speak.

### **2. The order of Job's response is also important in the debates. Job will address the friends and then address God.**

Job's response

- To Eliphaz (ch.6)      To God (ch.7)
- To Bildad (ch.9)      To God (ch.10)
- To Zophar (chs.12-13:19)      To God (chs.13:20-14:22)

### **3. "The problem is not so much with what the friends knew but with what they did not know: God's high purpose in allowing Satan to buffet Job." (NIV, 4:1)**

**PRINCIPLE:** False assumptions lead to false interpretations that lead to false expectations that lead to false applications.

**4. At the end of the First Debate of Job’s suffering, all three friends believe that that job’s suffering is due to divine discipline regarding some concealed unconfessed sin.**

“Like Eliphaz (4:7-11) and Bildad (8:3-6), Zophar claims Job’s sins have caused his trouble.” (NIV, 11:1-20)  
Zophar accuses Job of mocking God and thinks God should speak out against Job (11:3-5).

“Zophar assumes that job’s problems are rooted in his sin; all Job has to do is to repent, and then his life will become blessed and happy. But God will nowhere guarantees a life ‘brighter than noonday’ (11:7) simply because we are his children. He has higher purposes for us than our physical prosperity or people courting our favor (11:19). Zophar’s philosophy is in conflict with Psalms 73.” (NIV, 11:13-20)

**5. How important is it to understand the three categories of suffering?**

- Divine discipline (Heb.12:5-11)
- Self-induced misery
- Undeserved suffering (James 5:10-11)

Job is suffering because of undeserved suffering of the angelic conflict (Job 1:9-11; 2:4-5).

Victory in the angelic conflict silences the Satan and vindicated the righteousness of the believer and the justice of God that sentenced Satan to the lake of fire (Matt.25:41).

**6. Job’s friends think that Job needed a heavenly mediator to plead his case before God. (Remember the principle in point1.)**

“Call if you will, but who will answer you? To which of the holy ones will you turn?” (5:1)

“To plead your case with God. The idea of a mediator, someone to arbitrate between God and Job, is an important motif in the book (see 9:33; 16:19-20; see also NIV note on 19:25) (NIV, 5:1)

Even Job bought into this same thinking – “If only there were someone to arbitrate between us, to lay his hand upon us both.” (9:33)

“God is so immense that Job feels he needs someone who can help him, someone who can argue his case in court. Job’s call is not directly predicting the mediatorship of Christ, for Job is not looking for one to forgive him but for one who can testify to his innocence (see 16:20-21; 19:25-6). (NIV, 9:33)

**7. There is only one direct quote from the Book of Job in the NT and it comes from Act 3.**

This comes from Eliphaz who Paul quoted - “He catches the wise in their craftiness, and the schemes of the wily are swept away.” (Job 5:13; 1 Cor.3: 18-23, 19) wisdom of the world verses the wisdom of God (1 Cor.1-3).

Bildad said that life is but a shadow (8:9; Eccl.6:12). Zophar said that true wisdom has two sides (11:6).