



**JOB.
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JOB.**

A ST. JOHN'S BIBLE STUDY



WELCOME TO JOB!

Job is famously the “book about suffering.” Yet it is much more than that. The Book of Job is really about wisdom in the experience of suffering and about how God risks resting his reputation on his people. It is about recognizing our place in the universe, and trusting God’s ultimate and loving control of that universe. We are meant to empathize with Job’s suffering, not (like his friends) to treat him as a theological problem to be solved. Many people approach this book in the hope of explaining suffering, as though the book gives the answer to the question: If God is loving and all-powerful, why is there suffering in the world? This is an important question in the book but, when God speaks in the final chapters, he does not engage with this question at all. The problem with the question is that our human perspective is limited. We do not know enough, nor are we powerful enough, to deal with evil in the world. It is only God, the creator and sustainer of the universe, who can make these decisions and direct the affairs of human history to their proper and glorious end. Thankfully, it is in his hands that all of our suffering rests, meant for good and not for evil (Gen 50:20).

As the book opens, God allows Satan to test Job. He does this not just to reveal and deepen Job’s faith, but to be glorified as the God who should be worshipped for who he is, not just for what he can do for us. Behind Satan’s question “Does Job really love God?” is the deeper question “Is God actually loveable for himself?” As we come to the conclusion of the book, we see that the God who tests is also the God who restores, and Job miraculously receives a double-portion from God; not as a reward, but as a gracious blessing. Job easily could have died and joined the dust in which he sat, as many others who have suffered have. Instead, mercifully, God delivers Job and allows him to die “an old man, and full of days” (42:17).

I KNOW THAT MY REDEEMER LIVES

Yet there is still something deeply unsatisfying about the Book of Job. It is an unfinished book. Though everything we learn about God in this book is true, it is not the complete expression of God’s character, nor the final word on his plans for mankind. Through the progressive revelation of Scripture, Job anticipates and yearns for the arrival of the one who can sympathize with him in his every weakness and deliver him from it. In Chapter 19, as Job reflects on his loneliness and isolation, recognizing that God is a God of justice, he makes a startling and prophetic declaration of faith:

*For I know that my redeemer lives,
And at the last he will stand upon the earth.
And after my skin has been thus destroyed,
Yet in my flesh I shall see God,
Whom I shall see for myself,
And my eyes shall behold,
And not another.
My heart faints within me!*

Though Job could not have known the full beauty of what he was proclaiming, his confidence is clear. Another would come after Job’s death to be his advocate before the LORD and even to make right the terrible suffering he endured. Job prophesies the coming of the God-man Jesus Christ, which is why the epistle from James can speak about “the steadfastness of Job” as an example of how we ought to suffer (James 5:11). In Christ, like for Job, our suffering is redeemed and, at the last, with Job, we will behold Christ face to face, when the world is made new, and every tear is wiped away (Rev 21:4).

TABLE OF CONTENTS & OVERVIEW

Job is a big book and this series only covers eleven of its forty-two chapters. The best approach before beginning the individual studies is to read the entire book (perhaps aloud with someone else, since dialogue is a significant component), before diving down into some of the details. To help you get a better sense of the larger movements, here is one way to break everything down:

STUDY 1 JOB 1-3	PAGE 5
STUDY 2 JOB 22	PAGE 15
STUDY 3 JOB 23-24	PAGE 25
STUDY 4 JOB 28	PAGE 35
STUDY 5 JOB 31	PAGE 45
STUDY 6 JOB 40:1 - 42:9	PAGE 55

I. Introduction (chs.1-2)

- A. Job the Blameless and Upright (1:1-5)
- B. God and the Adversary (1:6-2:10)
- C. Job's Friends (2:11-13)

STUDY ONE

II. A Long Conversation Between Friends (chs.3-31)

- A. Job's Lament (ch.3)
- B. Cycles of Dialogue (chs.4-27)
 - 1. Cycle One: Attempts at Consolation (chs.4-14)
 - a) Eliphaz (chs.4-5)
 - b) Job (chs.6-7)
 - c) Bildad (ch.8)
 - d) Job (chs.9-10)
 - e) Zophar (ch.11)
 - f) Job (chs.12-14)
 - 2. Cycle Two: Punishment for the Wicked? (chs.15-21)
 - a) Eliphaz (ch.15)
 - b) Job (chs.16-17)
 - c) Bildad (ch.18)
 - d) Job (ch.19)
 - e) Zophar (ch.20)
 - f) Job (ch.21)
 - 3. Cycle Three: Pointed Accusations (chs.22-27)

a) Eliphaz (ch.22)

STUDY TWO

b) Job (chs.23-24)

STUDY THREE

c) Bildad (ch.25)

d) Job (chs.26-27)

D. Job's Search for Wisdom (ch.28)

STUDY FOUR

E. Job's Defense (chs.29-31)

1. Remembering the Past (ch.29)

2. Lamenting Affliction (ch.30)

3. A Final Appeal (ch.31)

STUDY FIVE

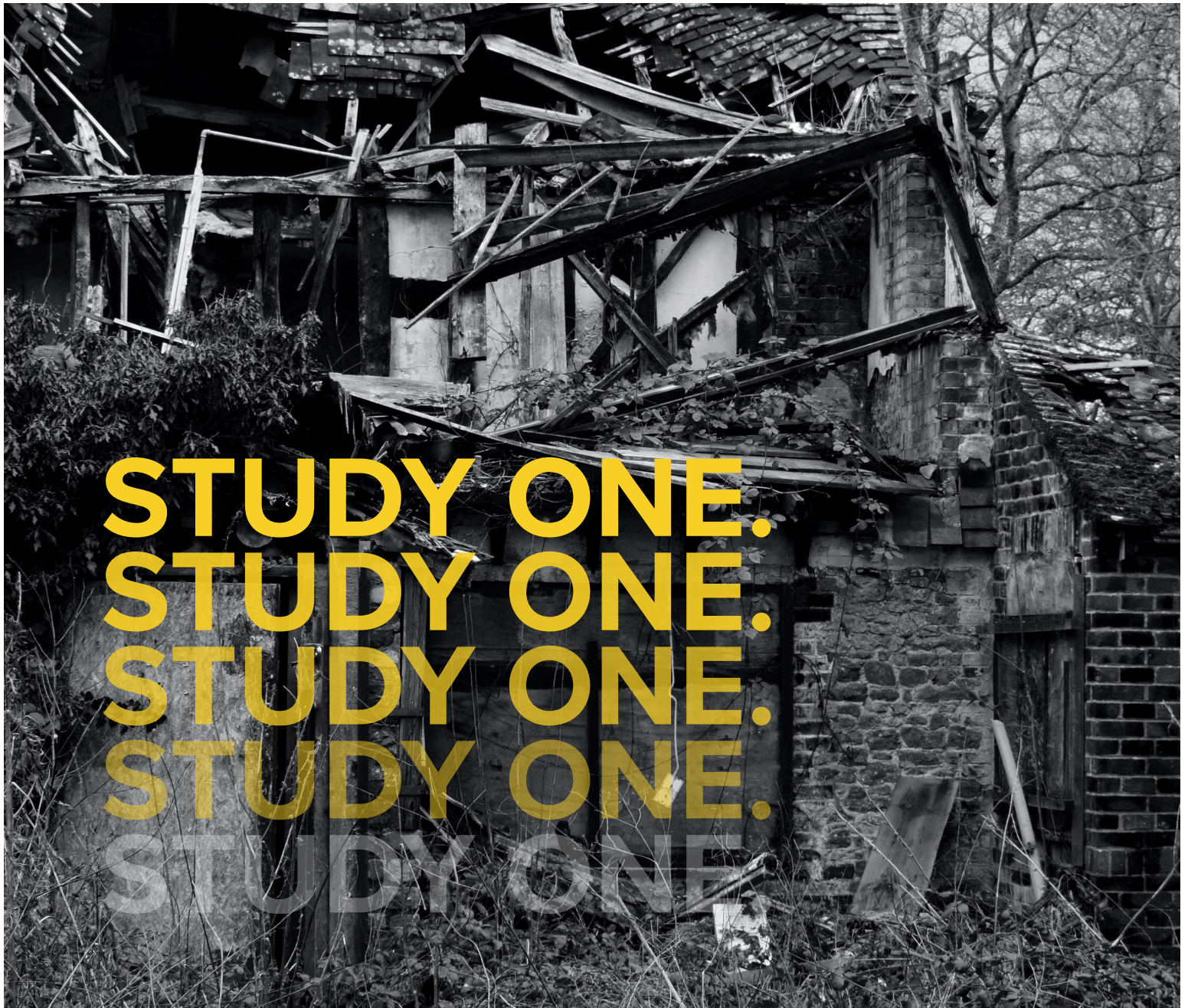
VI. Elihu Pipes Up (chs.32-37)

VII. God Speaks, Job Replies (chs.38-42:6)

- A. The Earth and All Its Creatures (chs.38-39)
- B. The Untameable and the Chaotic (chs.40-41)
- C. Job Repents (42:1-6)

STUDY SIX

VIII. Conclusion (42:7-17)



JOB 1-3

Most of Job is a dialogue between a man and his three friends who are trying to make sense of his suffering. In their conversation, it becomes clear that they are viewing circumstances from a human perspective and need God's wisdom to guide them. The book of Job opens and closes, however, with the heavenly perspective on Job's suffering, giving us as readers the right lens for seeing all of the action. Though this is a very long passage to begin our series with, it is an important introduction to the rest of the book. Even while we empathize with Job and his friends, we are able to see the situation more clearly.

In today's study, as the book begins, we are introduced to the main character, Job, and we learn that God himself allows Job to be tested by Satan in order to see where his allegiance truly is. Remarkably, Job passes the test. But, after experiencing this devastating affliction, although Job does not curse God, he breaks down and responds with a harrowing lament, taking us into the depths of his suffering and setting the stage for the rest of the book. Here in his opening lines, not only does Job lament his lot in life but he also yearns for wisdom, asking "why is light given to a man whose way is hidden?" (3:23).

PASSAGE

1:1 There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil. 2 There were born to him seven sons and three daughters. 3 He possessed 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, and 500 female donkeys, and very many servants, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the east. 4 His sons used to go and hold a feast in the house of each one on his day, and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. 5 And when the days of the feast had run their course, Job would send and consecrate them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, "It may be that my children have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts." Thus Job did continually.

6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them. 7 The Lord said to Satan, "From where have you come?" Satan answered the Lord and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it." 8 And the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?" 9 Then Satan answered the Lord and said, "Does Job fear God for no reason? 10 Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. 11 But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face." 12 And the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand." So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord.

13 Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, 14 and there came a messenger to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, 15 and the Sabeans fell upon them and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you." 16 While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, "The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, and I alone have escaped to tell you." 17 While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, "The Chaldeans formed three groups and made a raid on the camels and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you." 18 While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, "Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, 19 and behold, a great wind came across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young people, and they are dead, and I alone have escaped to tell you." 20 Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. 21 And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." 22 In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.

2:1 Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the Lord. 2 And the Lord said to Satan, "From where have you come?" Satan answered the Lord and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it." 3 And the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil? He still holds fast his integrity, although you incited me against him to destroy him without reason." 4 Then Satan answered the Lord and said, "Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life. 5 But stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face." 6 And the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life." 7 So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and struck Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. 8 And he took a piece of broken pottery with which to scrape himself while he sat in the ashes. 9 Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die." 10 But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

11 Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that had come upon him, they came each from his own place, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. They made an appointment together to come to show him sympathy and comfort him. 12 And when they saw him from a distance, they did not recognize him. And they raised their voices and wept, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads toward heaven. 13 And they sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great.

3:1 After this Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth. 2 And Job said:

3 “Let the day perish on which I was born,
and the night that said,
‘A man is conceived.’
4 Let that day be darkness!
May God above not seek it,
nor light shine upon it.
5 Let gloom and deep darkness claim it.
Let clouds dwell upon it;
let the blackness of the day terrify it.
6 That night—let thick darkness seize it!
Let it not rejoice among the days of the year;
let it not come into the number of the months.
7 Behold, let that night be barren;
let no joyful cry enter it.
8 Let those curse it who curse the day,
who are ready to rouse up Leviathan.
9 Let the stars of its dawn be dark;
let it hope for light, but have none,
nor see the eyelids of the morning,
10 because it did not shut the doors of my mother’s womb,
nor hide trouble from my eyes.

11 “Why did I not die at birth,
come out from the womb and expire?
12 Why did the knees receive me?
Or why the breasts, that I should nurse?
13 For then I would have lain down and been quiet;
I would have slept; then I would have been at rest,
14 with kings and counselors of the earth
who rebuilt ruins for themselves,
15 or with princes who had gold,
who filled their houses with silver.
16 Or why was I not as a hidden stillborn child,
as infants who never see the light?
17 There the wicked cease from troubling,
and there the weary are at rest.
18 There the prisoners are at ease together;
they hear not the voice of the taskmaster.
19 The small and the great are there,
and the slave is free from his master.

20 “Why is light given to him who is in misery,
and life to the bitter in soul,
21 who long for death, but it comes not,
and dig for it more than for hidden treasures,
22 who rejoice exceedingly
and are glad when they find the grave?
23 Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden,
whom God has hedged in?
24 For my sighing comes instead of[a] my bread,
and my groanings are poured out like water.
25 For the thing that I fear comes upon me,
and what I dread befalls me.
26 I am not at ease, nor am I quiet;
I have no rest, but trouble comes.”

STEP 1. WHAT DOES IT SAY?

NEED SOME HELP?

If you need some help with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 13.

Ⓐ Pray

Ⓑ Look Closely At

- Repetitions
- Images/metaphors
- Commands
- Warnings
- Contrasts
- Verbs—note past, present, and future. Who is doing this action?
- Big Bible Words
- Themes from the book

Ⓒ Look Structurally

- What is the tone of the passage?
- Divide the passage into its natural sections, one for each major thought.
- Create a heading or picture for each section
- Note key verses
- What does the structure reveal?
- What is the author's flow of thought?

Ⓓ A few questions to consider

- How many scenes are there? How would you summarize each scene?
- How is Job's character described?
- What role does God play in Job's suffering? (Note 1:10 and 3:23 in particular.)

STEP 2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

NEED SOME HELP?

If you need some help with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 13.

Ⓐ Look at the context

- Read the passage that has come immediately before and that follows straight after.
- How does this impact how we understand our passage?

Ⓑ A few questions to consider

- Why does it matter that Job is “blameless and upright”?
- What is at the root of Satan’s accusations and of the comment from Job’s wife in 2:9?
- Why do you think Job’s lament move from personal experience to general reflection?

Ⓒ What’s the Main Idea?

Ⓓ Stop to Pray

- Thank God for all he has revealed to you, ask him to help you see Him more clearly and love him more deeply through the next steps of your study.

STUDY NOTES

1:1 “There were born to him seven sons and three daughters...”

The writer is very intentional in highlighting Job’s similarity to the patriarchs. He is upright, wealthy, and powerful, just as Abraham was. Yet for all the good things God has given him, Job is going to lose everything in order to be taken deeper in his relationship with God.

1:6 “Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves...”

As the story begins, the Book of Job makes use of an ancient literary convention to describe the throne room of God, where angelic beings gather to give a report on affairs in the world (See Psalm 29:1 or 1 Kings 22:19-23 for other examples in the OT). The major difference in the way that the Bible portrays this scene is that God’s sovereignty remains absolute (e.g. The Accuser needs permission to afflict Job). In other Mesopotamian portrayals of divine councils, the supreme deity is actually dependent upon the less powerful gods to get things done, and these various gods do not always agree with each other. In contrast to the Bible, polytheism sees the world as fundamentally chaotic, making suffering uncontrolled and without any purpose.

1:6 “...and Satan also came among them.”

The identity of the character which the ESV translates as “Satan” or “the Adversary” is debated a fair bit in contemporary scholarship. Part of the issue is that in the original text we have a title rather than a personal name: the Satan (Hebrew *ha-satan*). In Hebrew *satan* means “to oppose, be hostile towards, accuse.” The title can denote someone who is simply in opposition, without any evil intention (e.g. the angel of the LORD in Numbers 22:22 is a *satan*; general adversity in 1 Kings 5:4 is described as *satan*). However, both here in Job and in Zechariah 3:1-2 (another book of the Bible probably written around the time of the Book of Job), the role of “the Satan” is taken up by someone who seems pretty clearly opposed both to man and to God, which fits well with what we learn about Satan from the New Testament. It is also significant that the earliest translations of Job render the Hebrew title *ha-satan* as “the devil” (Greek *diabolos*; “one who engages in slander”). This early interpretation of Job identifies *ha-satan* as Job’s accuser and as God’s great and ultimate opponent who, following Jesus’ teaching throughout the gospels, we now call Satan. A significant piece of evidence concerning the role of *ha-satan* from the New Testament is found in Revelation 12:9, where John writes

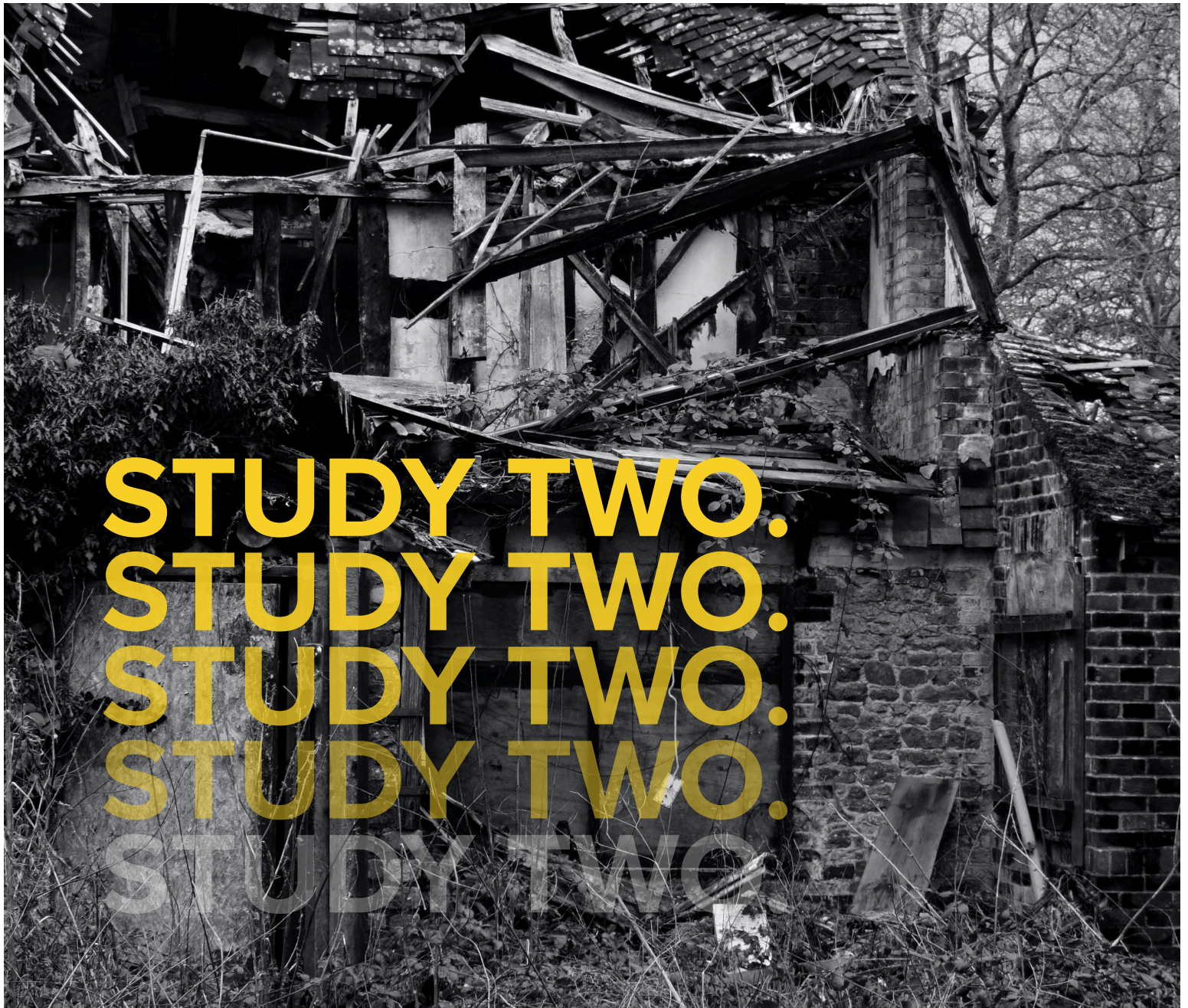
“The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, proclaiming, “Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Messiah, for the accuser of our comrades has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.””

2:8 “...while he sat in the ashes.”

Typically, in ancient cities, there would be a burn pit outside the walls where all of the garbage would be gathered. Job is not just sitting in the remnants of a fire; he has removed himself from society and now spends his time at the local dump where all the refuse is burned. It would be difficult to think of a more abject figure and setting than this.

3:3-10 “Let that day be darkness, may God above not seek it...”

Job is describing a place called Sheol, a realm which closely mirrors his physical location at the dump. Job talks about Sheol quite regularly in his dialogue throughout the book (e.g. 7:9, 14:13, 26:26 etc.) but here the reference is implied. Sheol is a shadowy realm of sorrow, where all the living go when they die. It is a place of death, decay, sickness, and shadow. It is not the place of final judgement for all who reject God (commonly referred to today as “hell”) because God’s presence is still in Sheol (e.g. Psa 139:8). Old Testament thinking about Sheol is never fully spelled out, so it is tricky to pin down. Deuteronomy 32:22 seems to indicate that God’s wrath can still be felt in Sheol, while 1 Kings 2:6 shows it is possible to go to Sheol in peace. Sheol can be used as a punishment by God (e.g. Num 16:30-33, Psa 55:15) but one can also be delivered from it (Psa 86:13). Here in Job, Sheol is the place where all the goodness of life is negated, and one finally receives reprieve from the agony of suffering.



JOB 22

Our second study takes us into the third of the three cycles of dialogue between Job and his companions (22:1-27:23; refer to the Study Guide intro for a breakdown of the book). Here, for the third and final time, Job's friends are making their arguments, focused specifically on accusing Job of being guilty of great sin and accusing him, therefore, of being culpable for his suffering. This passage was chosen as an example of one of the less-than-comforting conversations that make up a large component in the book. Eliphaz raises the questions of prosperity and providence (a common theme in these discussions) and calls into question the trustworthiness of Job's character.

These dialogues range from poor attempts to comfort Job, rationalisations for his current predicament, and accusations of secret wrongdoings that would be deserving of such punishment. Within each of these conversations we see how mechanical Job's friends' relationship with God is. They expect ease and prosperity in return for faith, and suffering in return for wickedness and a lack of faith. Underneath all of this discussion we should be asking what these men are claiming about the character of God and how he treats his friends, and what they think true wisdom is.

PASSAGE

22:1 Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said:

2 “Can a man be profitable to God?

Surely he who is wise is profitable to himself.

3 Is it any pleasure to the Almighty if you are in the right,
or is it gain to him if you make your ways blameless?

4 Is it for your fear of him that he reproves you
and enters into judgment with you?

5 Is not your evil abundant?

There is no end to your iniquities.

6 For you have exacted pledges of your brothers for nothing
and stripped the naked of their clothing.

7 You have given no water to the weary to drink,
and you have withheld bread from the hungry.

8 The man with power possessed the land,
and the favored man lived in it.

9 You have sent widows away empty,
and the arms of the fatherless were crushed.

10 Therefore snares are all around you,
and sudden terror overwhelms you,

11 or darkness, so that you cannot see,
and a flood of water covers you.

12 “Is not God high in the heavens?

See the highest stars, how lofty they are!

13 But you say, ‘What does God know?

Can he judge through the deep darkness?

14 Thick clouds veil him, so that he does not see,
and he walks on the vault of heaven.’

15 Will you keep to the old way
that wicked men have trod?

16 They were snatched away before their time;
their foundation was washed away.

17 They said to God, ‘Depart from us,’
and ‘What can the Almighty do to us?’

18 Yet he filled their houses with good things—
but the counsel of the wicked is far from me.

19 The righteous see it and are glad;
the innocent one mocks at them,

20 saying, ‘Surely our adversaries are cut off,
and what they left the fire has consumed.’

21 “Agree with God, and be at peace;
thereby good will come to you.

22 Receive instruction from his mouth,
and lay up his words in your heart.

23 If you return to the Almighty you will be built up;
if you remove injustice far from your tents,

24 if you lay gold in the dust,
and gold of Ophir among the stones of the torrent-bed,

25 then the Almighty will be your gold
and your precious silver.

PASSAGE CONT.

26 For then you will delight yourself in the Almighty
and lift up your face to God.

27 You will make your prayer to him, and he will hear you,
and you will pay your vows.

28 You will decide on a matter, and it will be established for you,
and light will shine on your ways.

29 For when they are humbled you say, 'It is because of pride';
but he saves the lowly.

30 He delivers even the one who is not innocent,
who will be delivered through the cleanness of your hands."

STEP 1. WHAT DOES IT SAY?

NEED SOME HELP?

If you need some help with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 23.

Ⓐ Pray

Ⓑ Look Closely At

- Repetitions
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- What is the tone of the passage?
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- Create a heading or picture for each section
- Note key verses
- What does the structure reveal?
- What is the author's flow of thought?

Ⓓ A few questions to consider

- What kinds of questions does Eliphaz ask in this passage?
- What are some repeated images or phrases in the monologue?

STEP 2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

NEED SOME HELP?

If you need some help with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 23.

Ⓐ Look at the context

- Read the passage that has come immediately before and that follows straight after.
- How does this impact how we understand our passage?

Ⓑ A few questions to consider

- What accusations about Job does Eliphaz make?
- What assumptions about Job does Eliphaz make in verses 5-9?
- What does Eliphaz suggest as the solution to Job's current predicament? (Pay attention to vv.21-30)

Ⓒ What's the Main Idea?

Ⓓ Stop to Pray

- Thank God for all he has revealed to you, ask him to help you see Jesus more clearly and love him more deeply through the next steps of your study.

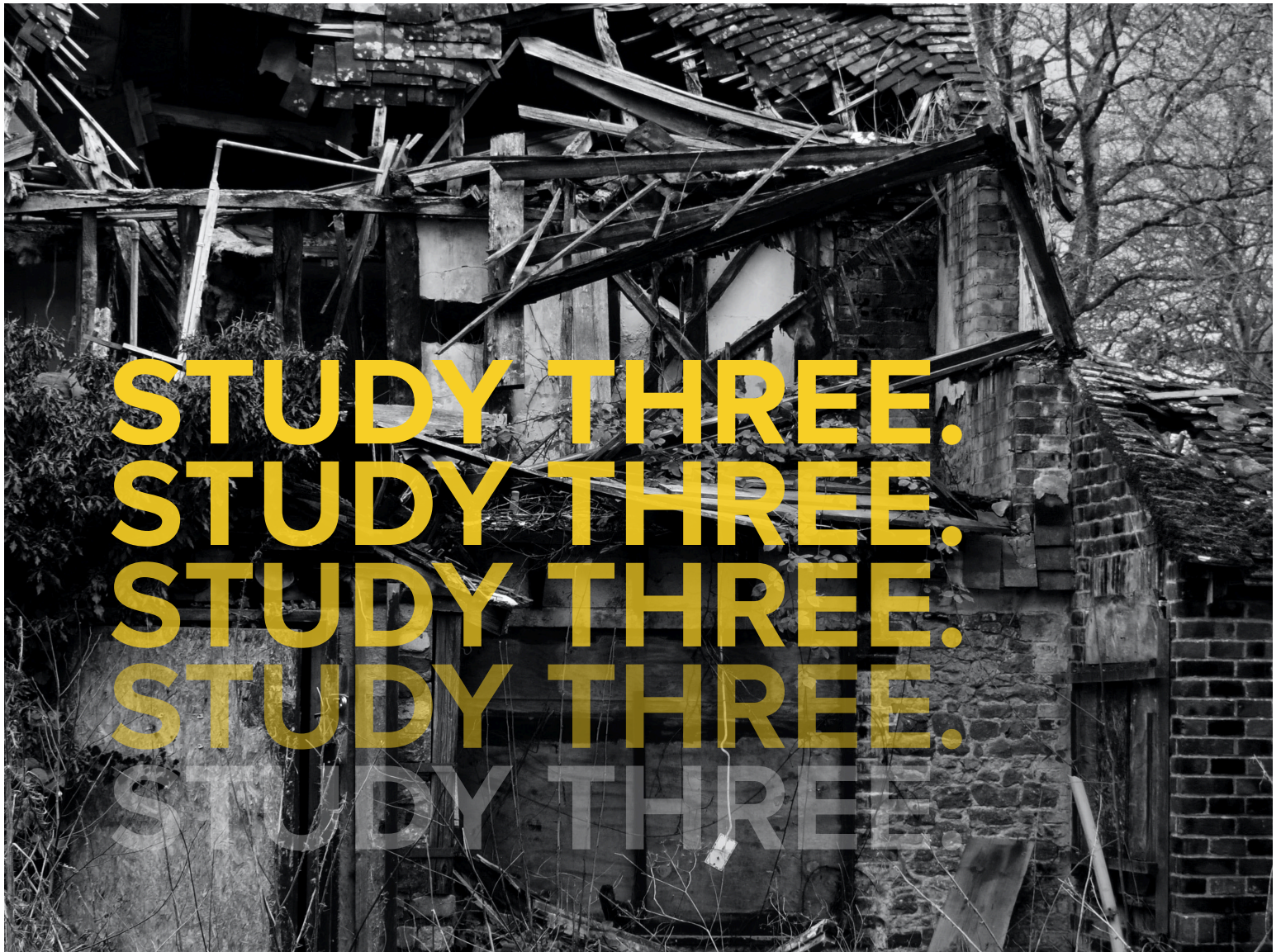
STUDY NOTES

NOTE 1

One of the tricky elements when it comes to dealing with the words from Job's friends is that they say both correct and woefully incorrect things within the same speech. The task for us is to be able to measure their words with what we already know of God and Job.

NOTE 2

In the opening chapters of Job we read about Satan's accusations regarding Job's devoutness, accrediting it to the amount of wealth and prosperity in Job's life. Job, he claimed, would not love and serve God if he had not filled Job's life with such ease and abundance! By doing so Satan accuses God of not being worthy of being loved and served for his own sake. Here in chapter 22, Eliphaz makes a similar argument, but in the reverse. To Eliphaz a person cannot experience suffering to such a degree as Job unless he has sinned greatly; and conversely, all righteous people are rewarded by God with the blessing of prosperity and happy circumstances. This idea is one of the central themes in the Book of Job and lies at the heart of the dialogue between Job and his friends. How can a glorious and good God allow a good man to suffer? And while their perspectives on this issue are incorrect, we need to think carefully about why that is so.



JOB 23-24

In our passage today, we continue the third cycle of speeches (22:1-27:23; Refer to the Study Guide intro for a breakdown of the book). Eliphaz began this cycle in Chapter 22 by accusing Job of great wickedness, but it is clear from Job's life that this is not the case.

Job's response to these accusations from his friends is complex. Here in Chapter 23 he begins by wishing for a heavenly court to put the matter right, knowing that his suffering cannot be punishment for sins he has committed. Then, having asserted his innocence, he transitions into a moving reflection on faith in the midst of suffering. In turns, Job is at times unable to perceive God's presence in the midst of his suffering (23:8), and at other times is absolutely terrified of God's presence (23:15). It is an honest and frank portrayal of his relationship with God. And yet, even in his suffering, Job continues to hold fast to walking in God's ways. He is "not silenced because of the darkness" that he is dwelling in (23:17).

Having finished his personal reflection, Job finally moves on to consider God's apparent absence in all of the suffering and injustice that we see daily in the world, in a way reminiscent of his opening lament in chapter 3. "There are those who rebel against the light, who are not acquainted with its ways, and do not stay in its paths" (24:13). The poor are taken advantage of, murderers and adulterers "dig through houses," and God does not bring any of them to account. This is both an open rebuke to Job's friends, who naively insist that the wicked always get what is coming to them, and a deeply troubling theme in Job's reflections throughout the book. Why do bad things happen to good people? How can evil run rampant in the presence of a good God?

PASSAGE

23:1 Then Job answered and said:

2 “Today also my complaint is bitter;

my hand is heavy on account of my groaning.

3 Oh, that I knew where I might find him,

that I might come even to his seat!

4 I would lay my case before him

and fill my mouth with arguments.

5 I would know what he would answer me

and understand what he would say to me.

6 Would he contend with me in the greatness of his power?

No; he would pay attention to me.

7 There an upright man could argue with him,

and I would be acquitted forever by my judge.

8 “Behold, I go forward, but he is not there,

and backward, but I do not perceive him;

9 on the left hand when he is working, I do not behold him;

he turns to the right hand, but I do not see him.

10 But he knows the way that I take;

when he has tried me, I shall come out as gold.

11 My foot has held fast to his steps;

I have kept his way and have not turned aside.

12 I have not departed from the commandment of his lips;

I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my portion of food.

13 But he is unchangeable, and who can turn him back?

What he desires, that he does.

14 For he will complete what he appoints for me,

and many such things are in his mind.

15 Therefore I am terrified at his presence;

when I consider, I am in dread of him.

16 God has made my heart faint;

the Almighty has terrified me;

17 yet I am not silenced because of the darkness,

nor because thick darkness covers my face.

24:1“Why are not times of judgment kept by the Almighty,
and why do those who know him never see his days?

2 Some move landmarks;

they seize flocks and pasture them.

3 They drive away the donkey of the fatherless;

they take the widow’s ox for a pledge.

4 They thrust the poor off the road;

the poor of the earth all hide themselves.

5 Behold, like wild donkeys in the desert

the poor go out to their toil, seeking game;

the wasteland yields food for their children.

6 They gather their fodder in the field,

and they glean the vineyard of the wicked man.

7 They lie all night naked, without clothing,

and have no covering in the cold.

8 They are wet with the rain of the mountains

and cling to the rock for lack of shelter.

9 (There are those who snatch the fatherless child from the breast,

PASSAGE CONT.

- and they take a pledge against the poor.)
- 10 They go about naked, without clothing;
hungry, they carry the sheaves;
- 11 among the olive rows of the wicked they make oil;
they tread the winepresses, but suffer thirst.
- 12 From out of the city the dying groan,
and the soul of the wounded cries for help;
yet God charges no one with wrong.
- 13 “There are those who rebel against the light,
who are not acquainted with its ways,
and do not stay in its paths.
- 14 The murderer rises before it is light,
that he may kill the poor and needy,
and in the night he is like a thief.
- 15 The eye of the adulterer also waits for the twilight,
saying, ‘No eye will see me’;
and he veils his face.
- 16 In the dark they dig through houses;
by day they shut themselves up;
they do not know the light.
- 17 For deep darkness is morning to all of them;
for they are friends with the terrors of deep darkness.
- 18 “You say, ‘Swift are they on the face of the waters;
their portion is cursed in the land;
no treacher turns toward their vineyards.
- 19 Drought and heat snatch away the snow waters;
so does Sheol those who have sinned.
- 20 The womb forgets them;
the worm finds them sweet;
they are no longer remembered,
so wickedness is broken like a tree.’
- 21 “They wrong the barren, childless woman,
and do no good to the widow.
- 22 Yet God prolongs the life of the mighty by his power;
they rise up when they despair of life.
- 23 He gives them security, and they are supported,
and his eyes are upon their ways.
- 24 They are exalted a little while, and then are gone;
they are brought low and gathered up like all others;
they are cut off like the heads of grain.
- 25 If it is not so, who will prove me a liar
and show that there is nothing in what I say?”

STEP 1. WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Ⓐ Pray

Ⓑ Look Closely At

- Repetitions
- Images/metaphors
- Commands
- Warnings

- Contrasts
- Verbs—note past, present, and future. Who is doing this action?
- Big Bible Words
- Themes from the book

Ⓒ Look Structurally

- What is the tone of the passage?
- Divide the passage into its natural sections, one for each major thought.
- Create a heading or picture for each section
- Note key verses
- What does the structure reveal?
- What is the author's flow of thought?

NEED SOME HELP?

If you need some help with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 33.

Ⓓ A few questions to consider

- What is the focus of each chapter in this passage?
- How is God characterized?
- What sort of wicked people do we encounter in this passage? How are they portrayed?

STEP 2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

NEED SOME HELP?

If you need some help with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 33.

Ⓐ Look at the context

- Read the passage that has come immediately before and that follows straight after.
- How does this impact how we understand our passage?

Ⓑ A few questions to consider

- In the immediately preceding chapter, Eliphaz maintains that wickedness is always punished and the righteous prosper, thereby implying that Job must have sinned. How does Job respond?
- Immediately after Job's speech, Bildad speaks and compares mankind to worms. How does this overapplication of God's sovereignty help us understand Job's perspective in this passage?
- Though Job's circumstances are difficult, what does he continue to affirm?

Ⓒ What's the Main Idea?

Ⓓ Stop to Pray

- Thank God for all he has revealed to you, ask him to help you see Him more clearly and love him more deeply through the next steps of your study.

PRAYER & PRAYER REQUESTS

Take some time to write down some prayer items and requests from those around you.

STUDY NOTES

23:1 “Today my complaint is bitter..”

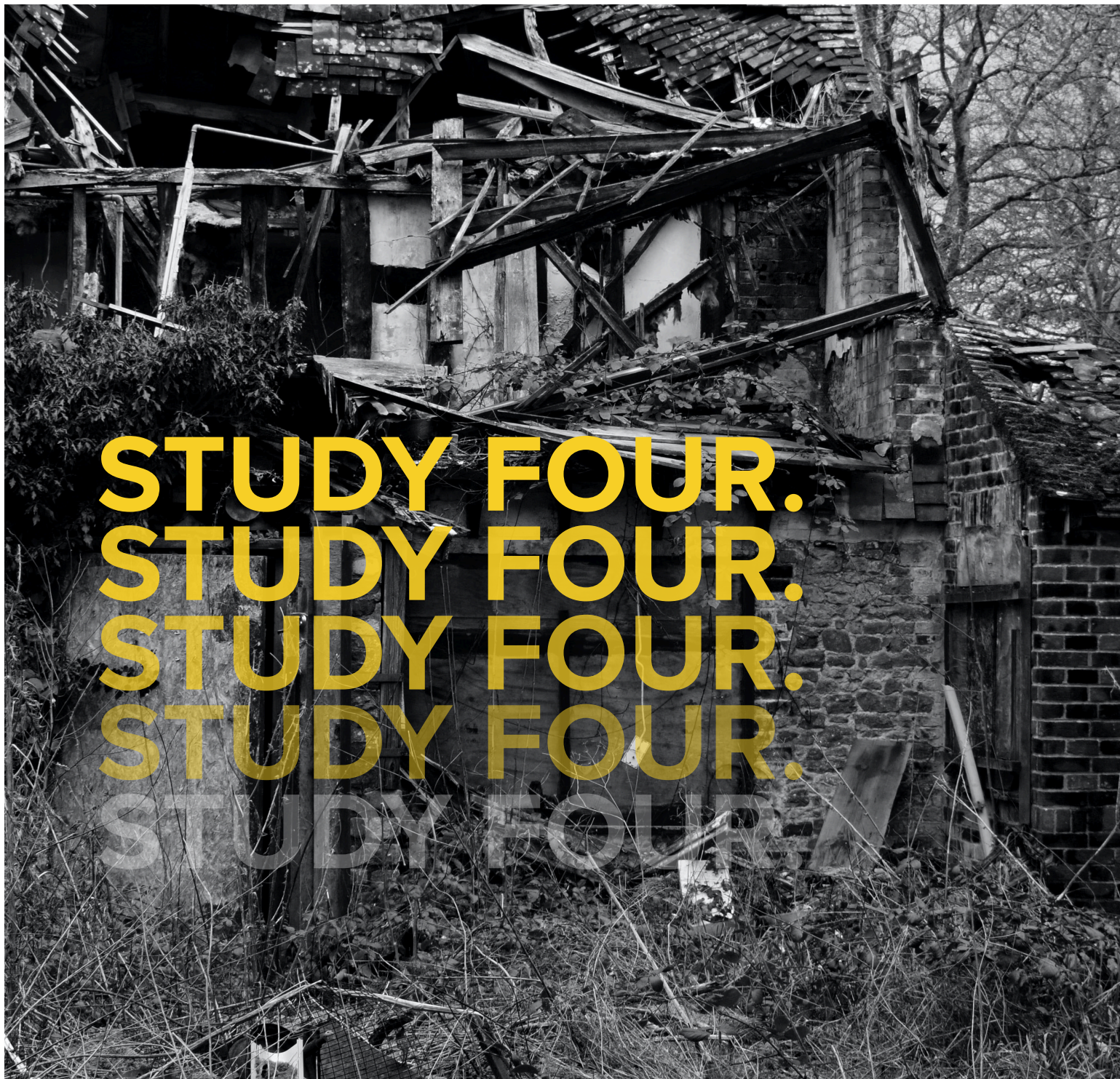
Job opens his response to Eliphaz by making use of legal terminology, envisioning himself approaching God’s judgement seat in order to have his case heard. This court scene is a motif that runs throughout the book as Job asks God for justice to be done (e.g. 13:6, 31:35 etc.). The underlying issue is that Job rightfully expects his loving and all-powerful God to hear his prayers and care for him. However, God does not seem to be responding, and so Job cries out.

The court motif is also the setting for one of the most poignant declarations which Job gives in the book: In these verses in Chapter 19 (not included in our series) he makes reference to a redeemer, one who would step in on his behalf after his death and take up his cause:

23 “Oh that my words were written!
 Oh that they were inscribed in a book!
24 Oh that with an iron pen and lead
 they were engraved in the rock forever!
25 For I know that my Redeemer lives,
 and at the last he will stand upon the earth.
26 And after my skin has been thus destroyed,
 yet in my flesh I shall see God,
27 whom I shall see for myself,
 and my eyes shall behold, and not another.
 My heart faints within me!
28 If you say, ‘How we will pursue him!’
 and, ‘The root of the matter is found in him,’
29 be afraid of the sword,
 for wrath brings the punishment of the sword,
 that you may know there is a judgment.”

23:10 “But he knows the way that I take...”

Continuing to trust in God’s goodness, Job displays with these lines precisely why God calls him a “blameless and upright man” at the start of the book (1:8). The language in 23:10-12 is strongly reminiscent of the Psalms (e.g. Psa 119:11).



JOB 28

Chapter 28 marks the close of the section of the dialogue which began with Job's lament in chapter 3. Having been reduced to ashes and sorrow, Job has begged his friends, and God, for wisdom. Here, after twenty-five chapters of thorny conversation, Job offers his own reflections on wisdom and how difficult it is for a person to discover it. Of the many claims made by Job's friends, a central one is their confidence in their understanding of what wisdom is. In fact the question "What is wisdom?" lies at the heart of the writings among which the book of Job is included: Ecclesiastes, Psalms, Proverbs, and the Song of Solomon. The following beautiful poem from Job shows how truly precious the wisdom which he seeks is, and also serves to open the next section of the book. This chapter not only answers one of the key questions of the wisdom books, it also reveals the heart of both the book and the man Job.

PASSAGE

- 1 “Surely there is a mine for silver,
and a place for gold that they refine.
- 2 Iron is taken out of the earth,
and copper is smelted from the ore.
- 3 Man puts an end to darkness
and searches out to the farthest limit
the ore in gloom and deep darkness.
- 4 He opens shafts in a valley away from where anyone lives;
they are forgotten by travelers;
they hang in the air, far away from mankind; they swing to and fro.
- 5 As for the earth, out of it comes bread,
but underneath it is turned up as by fire.
- 6 Its stones are the place of sapphires,
and it has dust of gold.
- 7 “That path no bird of prey knows,
and the falcon’s eye has not seen it.
- 8 The proud beasts have not trodden it;
the lion has not passed over it.
- 9 “Man puts his hand to the flinty rock
and overturns mountains by the roots.
- 10 He cuts out channels in the rocks,
and his eye sees every precious thing.
- 11 He dams up the streams so that they do not trickle,
and the thing that is hidden he brings out to light.
- 12 “But where shall wisdom be found?
And where is the place of understanding?
- 13 Man does not know its worth,
and it is not found in the land of the living.
- 14 The deep says, ‘It is not in me,’
and the sea says, ‘It is not with me.’
- 15 It cannot be bought for gold,
and silver cannot be weighed as its price.
- 16 It cannot be valued in the gold of Ophir,
in precious onyx or sapphire.
- 17 Gold and glass cannot equal it,
nor can it be exchanged for jewels of fine gold.
- 18 No mention shall be made of coral or of crystal;
The price of wisdom is above pearls.
- 19 The topaz of Ethiopia cannot equal it,
nor can it be valued in pure gold.
- 20 “From where, then, does wisdom come?
And where is the place of understanding?
- 21 It is hidden from the eyes of all living
and concealed from the birds of the air.
- 22 Abaddon and Death say,
‘We have heard a rumor of it with our ears.’
- 23 “God understands the way to it,
and he knows its place.
- 24 For he looks to the ends of the earth
and sees everything under the heavens.

PASSAGE CONT.

25 When he gave to the wind its weight
and apportioned the waters by measure,
26 when he made a decree for the rain
and a way for the lightning of the thunder,
27 then he saw it and declared it;
he established it, and searched it out.
28 And he said to man,
‘Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom,
and to turn away from evil is understanding.’”

STEP 1. WHAT DOES IT SAY?

NEED SOME HELP?

If you need some help with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 43.

Ⓐ Pray

Ⓑ Look Closely At

- Repetitions
- Images/metaphors
- Commands
- Warnings
- Contrasts
- Verbs—note past, present, and future. Who is doing this action?
- Big Bible Words
- Themes from the book

Ⓒ Look Structurally

- What is the tone of the passage?
- Divide the passage into its natural sections, one for each major thought.
- Create a heading or picture for each section
- Note key verses
- What does the structure reveal?
- What is the author's flow of thought?

Ⓓ A few questions to consider

- How many parts are there to the poem? How might you categorize them?
- What type of negative statements are made in vv.13-19? What ideas do they help to reinforce?
- What kinds of verbs are used to talk about God in vv.23-28?

STEP 2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

NEED SOME HELP?

If you need some help with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 43.

Ⓐ Look at the context

- Read the passage that has come immediately before and that follows straight after.
- How does this impact how we understand our passage?

Ⓑ A few questions to consider

- What do vv.1-11 establish about the accomplishments of humanity? How does this relate to the search for wisdom?
- The fear of the LORD is a major theme throughout the Bible, especially in wisdom literature. Have a read of these passages: Deut 10:12-13, Prov 1:7, Ecc 12:13. What is the fear of the LORD? How do these passages help you understand what Job is saying here?

Ⓒ What's the Main Idea?

Ⓓ Stop to Pray

- Thank God for all he has revealed to you, ask him to help you see Him more clearly and love him more deeply through the next steps of your study.

STUDY NOTES

CHAPTER 28

The place of this chapter within the book of Job is a bit puzzling. Why does Job choose to wrap up the dialogue with his friends with a speech about wisdom? There is some scholarly argumentation about this chapter, but it can be seen as the completion of Job's initially pained questions in chapter 3 (Why was I born? Why doesn't God have mercy and take the life of those who suffer?) The cycle of speeches began with Job crying out to learn why his life is filled with such agony, begging for wisdom from his friends and from God. Now after twenty-five chapters his friends have failed to answer him and God hasn't said anything at all (at least not yet). Chapter 28 confirms that Job still understands that truly only God knows where wisdom is and can show how it is found. In fact, wisdom is not to be found in a place but only in the person of God, and only when we come to God in the right manner, that is, in the fear of the Lord.

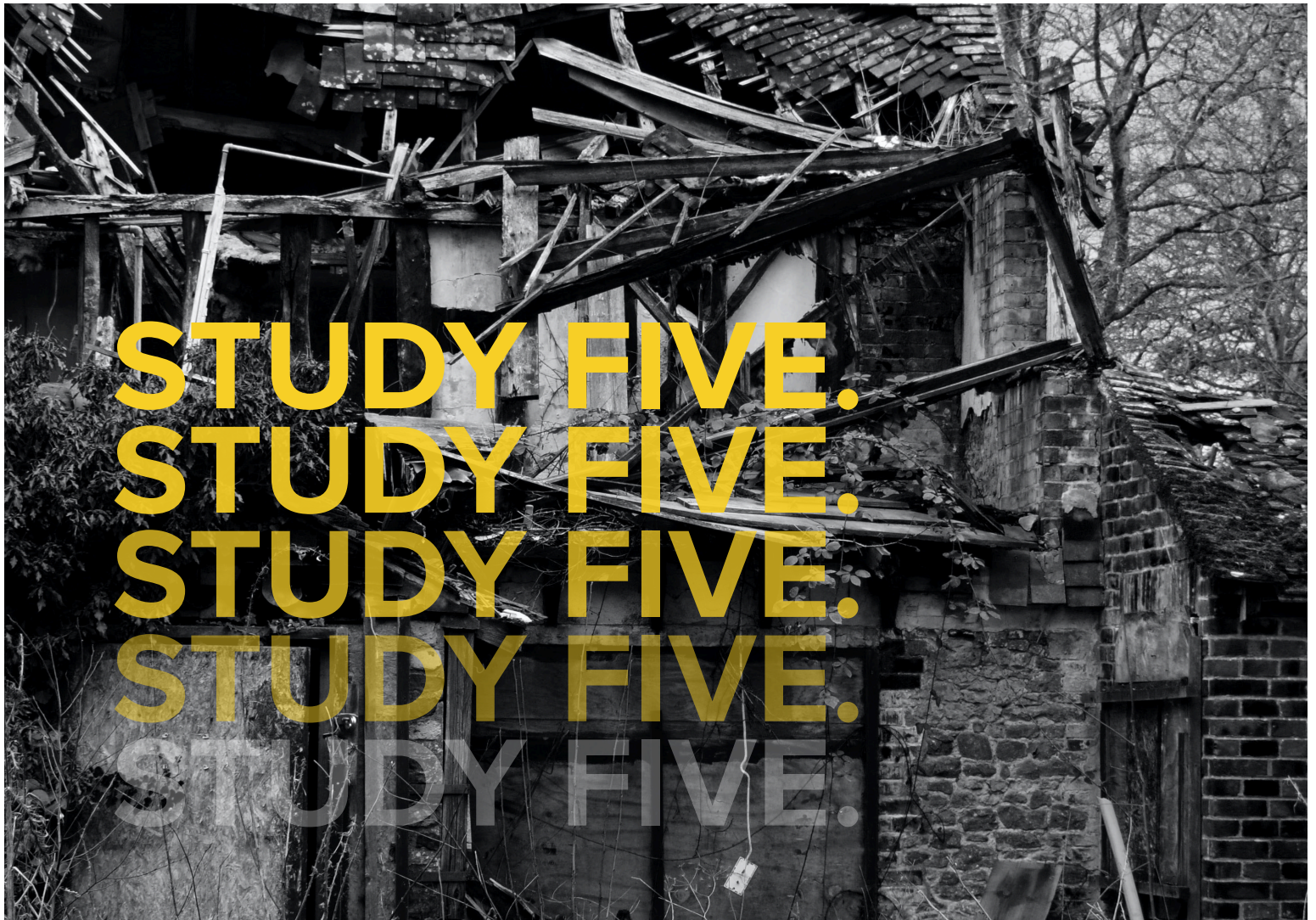
THE FEAR OF THE LORD

The Biblical understanding of this term describes the kind of fear that makes you run TO God (not from him) and to hear, listen, love and obey. It describes the appropriate response of all people to the God who has created them; especially of those he has loved and redeemed and called his own people. It carries the idea of reverent awe and submissive faith--in an encounter with the LORD God of Israel--which responds to God's revelation and turns from all evil. This idea is expressed clearly in the following verse.

And now of Israel what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul, and to observe the Lord's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for all your own good? (Deuteronomy 10:12-13)

DEATH & ABBADON

Verse 22 is a little off the beaten track in this speech. Here are two unusual personifications: Death and Abbadon. Tacking down an exact translation for Abbadon is a little tricky, but the idea behind it is a bottomless pit, or someone who watches over that pit. The concept portrays complete and utter destruction. When Job asks "Where does wisdom come from?" no one can answer him; even Death and Destruction have only heard the whisper of a rumor that perhaps there is wisdom hidden somewhere. But they don't have any comfort or answers to offer Job in the face of his great anguish. God alone is the one who has wisdom, and he has brought Job to the place where soon he will know this first-hand.



JOB 31

Chapters 29-31 are an eloquent speech with Job summarizing his defence. In ch.29 he reminisces on the old life he had, where he was in good relationships with both God and his fellow man. Chapter 30 features Job's last major lament over his downfall and current state of affairs. That brings us to today's passage, chapter 31, where Job presents his final appeal to God and asks him why such events have taken place. Job compiles a list of grievous sins he possibly could have committed and he agrees that, if he had committed any of these, he would indeed deserve the fate that has befallen him. This conundrum is his overall point. Job, as we know, is innocent and now has run out of patience with the platitudes and placations of his friends. And so, in vv.35-37, we have Job's formal challenge:

*35 Oh, that I had one to hear me!
(Here is my signature! Let the Almighty answer me!)
Oh, that I had the indictment written by my adversary!*

*36 Surely I would carry it on my shoulder;
I would bind it on me as a crown;*

*37 I would give him an account of all my steps;
like a prince I would approach him.*

Here Job, a mere mortal, is making large demands of the Almighty God, which, as we will read later, is not a challenge God is unable to answer. But ultimately after chapters of his friends' attempts to explain his suffering with hidden and unfounded sins, Job demands that God justify what has happened to him.

PASSAGE

- 1 “I have made a covenant with my eyes;
how then could I gaze at a virgin?
- 2 What would be my portion from God above
and my heritage from the Almighty on high?
- 3 Is not calamity for the unrighteous,
and disaster for the workers of iniquity?
- 4 Does not he see my ways
and number all my steps?
- 5 “If I have walked with falsehood
and my foot has hastened to deceit;
- 6 (Let me be weighed in a just balance,
and let God know my integrity!)
- 7 if my step has turned aside from the way
and my heart has gone after my eyes,
and if any spot has stuck to my hands,
- 8 then let me sow, and another eat,
and let what grows for me be rooted out.
- 9 “If my heart has been enticed toward a woman,
and I have lain in wait at my neighbor’s door,
- 10 then let my wife grind for another,
and let others bow down on her.
- 11 For that would be a heinous crime;
that would be an iniquity to be punished by the judges;
- 12 for that would be a fire that consumes as far as Abaddon,
and it would burn to the root all my increase.
- 13 “If I have rejected the cause of my manservant or my maidservant,
when they brought a complaint against me,
- 14 what then shall I do when God rises up?
When he makes inquiry, what shall I answer him?
- 15 Did not he who made me in the womb make him?
And did not one fashion us in the womb?
- 16 “If I have withheld anything that the poor desired,
or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail,
- 17 or have eaten my morsel alone,
and the fatherless has not eaten of it
- 18 (for from my youth the fatherless grew up with me as with a father,
and from my mother’s womb I guided the widow),
- 19 if I have seen anyone perish for lack of clothing,
or the needy without covering,
- 20 if his body has not blessed me,
and if he was not warmed with the fleece of my sheep,
- 21 if I have raised my hand against the fatherless,
because I saw my help in the gate,
- 22 then let my shoulder blade fall from my shoulder,
and let my arm be broken from its socket.
- 23 For I was in terror of calamity from God,
and I could not have faced his majesty.
- 24 “If I have made gold my trust
or called fine gold my confidence,
- 25 if I have rejoiced because my wealth was abundant
or because my hand had found much,

PASSAGE CONT.

26 if I have looked at the sun when it shone,
or the moon moving in splendor,
27 and my heart has been secretly enticed,
and my mouth has kissed my hand,
28 this also would be an iniquity to be punished by the judges,
for I would have been false to God above.
29 “If I have rejoiced at the ruin of him who hated me,
or exalted when evil overtook him
30 (I have not let my mouth sin
by asking for his life with a curse),
31 if the men of my tent have not said,
‘Who is there that has not been filled with his meat?’
32 (the sojourner has not lodged in the street;
I have opened my doors to the traveler),
33 if I have concealed my transgressions as others do
by hiding my iniquity in my heart,
34 because I stood in great fear of the multitude,
and the contempt of families terrified me,
so that I kept silence, and did not go out of doors—
35 Oh, that I had one to hear me!
(Here is my signature! Let the Almighty answer me!)
Oh, that I had the indictment written by my adversary!
36 Surely I would carry it on my shoulder;
I would bind it on me as a crown;
37 I would give him an account of all my steps;
like a prince I would approach him.
38 “If my land has cried out against me
and its furrows have wept together,
39 if I have eaten its yield without payment
and made its owners breathe their last,
40 let thorns grow instead of wheat,
and foul weeds instead of barley.”

STEP 1. WHAT DOES IT SAY?

NEED SOME HELP?

If you need some help with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 53.

Ⓐ Pray

Ⓑ Look Closely At

- Repetitions
- Images/metaphors
- Commands
- Warnings
- Contrasts
- Verbs—note past, present, and future. Who is doing this action?
- Big Bible Words
- Themes from the book

Ⓒ Look Structurally

- What is the tone of the passage?
- Divide the passage into its natural sections, one for each major thought.
- Create a heading or picture for each section
- Note key verses
- What does the structure reveal?
- What is the author's flow of thought?

Ⓓ A few questions to consider

- What recurring phrase does Job use in this section? What does it reveal to us?
- This chapter sees Job make lists of possible transgressions from different areas of his previous life. What are those areas and why might they be presented as evidence against him?

STEP 2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

NEED SOME HELP?

If you need some help with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 53.

Ⓐ Look at the context

- Read the passage that has come immediately before and that follows straight after.
- How does this impact how we understand our passage?

Ⓑ A few questions to consider

- Read chapter 29 (part of the same speech). We have a description of Job's life before this suffering: how was it different? What expectations for his good and righteous life does he have in verses 29:18-20?
- Recall the accusations of Job's friends (e.g. Eliphaz in 22:5 "Is not your evil abundant? There is no end to your iniquities."). What is Job asking for in 31:35-37? How is this a response to the charges made against him?

Ⓒ What's the Main Idea?

Ⓓ Stop to Pray

- Thank God for all he has revealed to you, ask him to help you see Him more clearly and love him more deeply through the next steps of your study.

STUDY NOTES

v.10 “then let my wife grind for another..”

This verse is a bit ambiguous. It could either be a graphic image of sexual immorality or it could be a reference to Job’s wife doing another man’s housework (i.e. the grinding of the grain). Keeping in theme with vv.1-11, this line is talking about a failed marriage. Its shocking nature is meant to remind us of Job’s uprightness.

vv.26-28 “if I have looked at the sun when it shone...and my mouth had kissed my hand..”

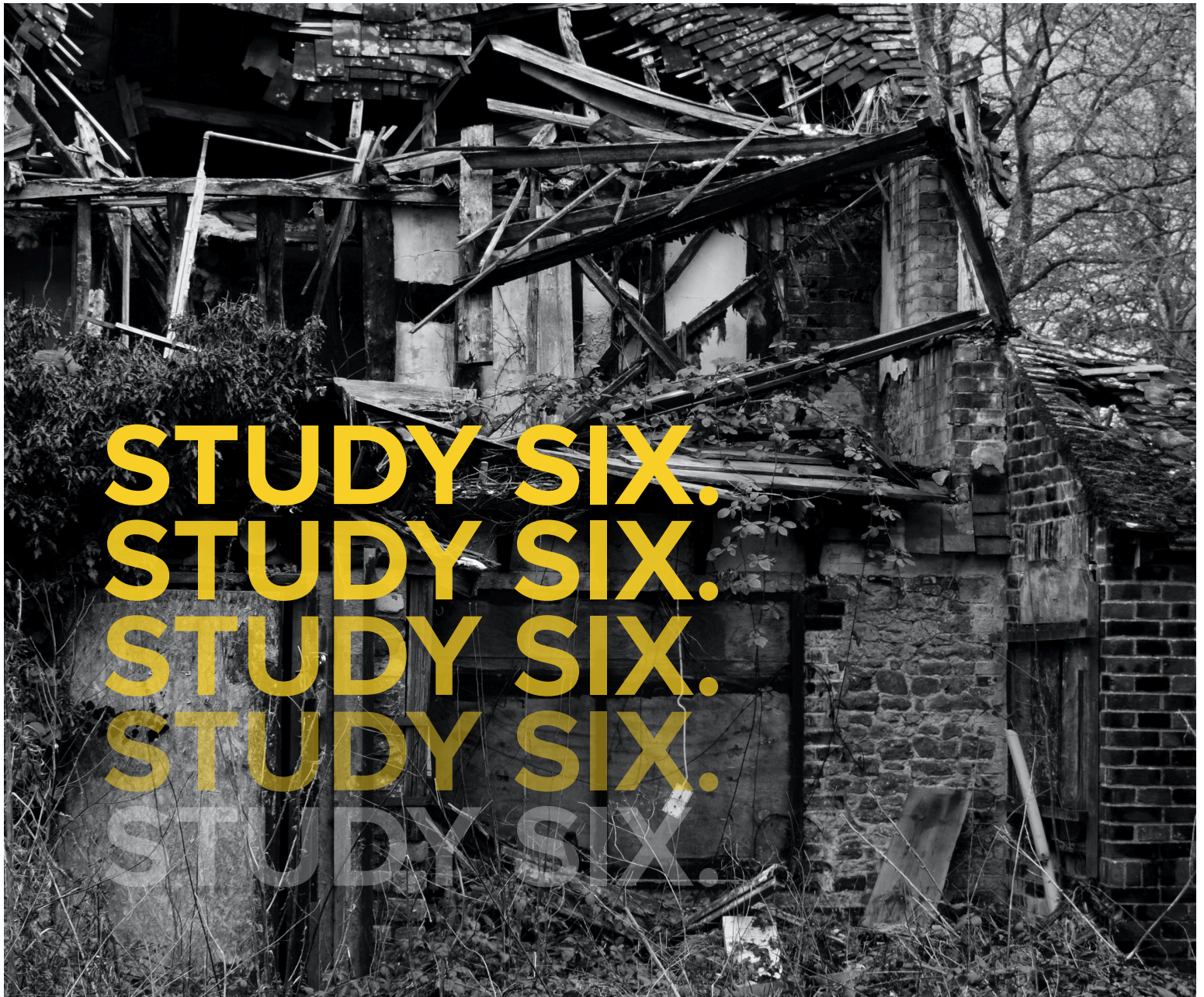
In this section of Job’s defense, he is referring to worldly temptations that he has resisted. The main inference from these verses is Job’s rejection of idolatry. Scholars comment that it was customary to kiss the hands of idols or monuments you worshiped much like an act of fealty with a king. Job here is saying that not only has his heart not been swayed to the worship of celestial bodies, but he has also not partaken in any customs associated with these superstitions.

v.35 “Here is my signature!”

Job has laid out a very long and detailed oath regarding his innocence. That oath reaches its climax with his affixing his own signature, establishing it as truth, as true as his own name. He calls for God to hear and answer him and name the charges laid against him. Then, he claims “I would carry it on my shoulder; I would bind it on me as a crown”. With all of the details properly laid out, then Job would finally be able to engage with the supposed charges laid against him. Keep in mind that Job has claimed that God has stripped him of his crown and glory (19:9). Since Job has nothing left, this indictment of God will be his clothing, his crown for all to see until he is answered in some fashion.

vv.38-40: Job’s Garden

Having gone through many different areas in his life, Job turns at last towards the land itself. These verses evoke reminders of Genesis 2. Job knows his role is to work and oversee the land, and he acquits himself of wrongdoing. He hasn’t stolen from the ground or from others; he has worked the earth fairly. But he echoes also the curse of Genesis 3, that if he does sin against the land it should curl up with thorns and cause him only ceaseless toil.



JOB 40:1 - 42:9

With this study we come to the end of the Book of Job. The story began with Job, a man who was not only wealthy and successful, but also blameless and upright. And then, through a series of catastrophic events, Job is tested by Satan and reduced to misery, scraping his wounds while living outside the city at the local dump; a man who has lost everything. Through the rest of the book, as we follow Job's conversation with his friends, we see a man struggle mightily with his suffering in an attempt to make sense of it all and persevere. A constant refrain throughout Job's speeches is his request to have an audience with God so that he might plead his case and receive relief. Finally, at the end of the book, Job gets his audience, and God speaks, delivering his longest uninterrupted speech in the entire Bible. Though God's answer to Job might not be what he (and we) want to hear, it is exactly what we (and he) need to hear. Thoroughly humbled, Job repents of his presumption, and then intercedes in prayer on behalf of his foolish friends. Graciously, God welcomes them all and restores Job's fortunes, bringing the book to a hopeful ending. This is the beauty of God's grace: that it restores us. Though Job could not have known the full depth of this grace, another would come after Job's death to be his advocate before the LORD, and make right the terrible suffering he endured. In Christ, like for Job, our suffering is redeemed and; at the last, with Job, we will behold Christ face to face, when the world is made new, and every tear is wiped away (Rev 21:4)

PASSAGE

40:1 And the LORD said to Job:

2 “Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty?
He who argues with God, let him answer it.”

3 Then Job answered the LORD and said:

4 “Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer you?
I lay my hand on my mouth.

5 I have spoken once, and I will not answer;
twice, but I will proceed no further.”

6 Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said:

7 “Dress for action like a man;
I will question you, and you make it known to me.

8 Will you even put me in the wrong?
Will you condemn me that you may be in the right?

9 Have you an arm like God,
and can you thunder with a voice like his?

10 “Adorn yourself with majesty and dignity;
clothe yourself with glory and splendor.

11 Pour out the overflowings of your anger,
and look on everyone who is proud and abase him.

12 Look on everyone who is proud and bring him low
and read down the wicked where they stand.

13 Hide them all in the dust together;
bind their faces in the world below.

14 Then will I also acknowledge to you
that your own right hand can save you.

15 “Behold, Behemoth,
which I made as I made you;
he eats grass like an ox.

16 Behold, his strength in his loins,
and his power in the muscles of his belly.

17 He makes his tail stiff like a cedar;
the sinews of his thighs are knit together.

18 His bones are tubes of bronze,
his limbs like bars of iron.

19 “He is the first of the works of God;
let him who made him bring near his sword!

20 For the mountains yield food for him
where all the wild beasts play.

21 Under the lotus plants he lies,
in the shelter of the reeds and in the marsh.

22 For his shade the lotus trees cover him;
the willows of the brook surround him.

23 Behold, if the river is turbulent he is not frightened;
he is confident though Jordan rushes against his mouth.

24 Can one take him by his eyes,
or pierce his nose with a snare?

PASSAGE CONT.

- 41:1 “Can you draw out Leviathan with a fishhook
or press down his tongue with a cord?
2 Can you put a rope in his nose
or pierce his jaw with a hook?
3 Will he make many pleas to you?
Will he speak to you soft words?
4 Will he make a covenant with you
to take him for your servant forever?
5 Will you play with him as with a bird,
or will you put him on a leash for your girls?
6 Will traders bargain over him?
Will they divide him up among the merchants?
7 Can you fill his skin with harpoons
or his head with fishing spears?
8 Lay your hands on him;
remember the battle—you will not do it again!
9 Behold, the hope of a man is false;
he is laid low even at the sight of him.
10 No one is so fierce that he dares to stir him up.
Who then is he who can stand before me?
11 Who has first given to me, that I should repay him?
Whatever is under the whole heaven is mine.
12 “I will not keep silence concerning his limbs,
or his mighty strength, or his goodly frame.
13 Who can strip off his outer garment?
Who would come near him with a bridle?
14 Who can open the doors of his face?
Around his teeth is terror.
15 His back is made of rows of shields,
shut up closely as with a seal.
16 One is so near to another
that no air can come between them.
17 They are joined one to another;
they clasp each other and cannot be separated.
18 His sneezings flash forth light,
and his eyes are like the eyelids of the dawn.
19 Out of his mouth go flaming torches;
sparks of fire leap forth.
20 Out of his nostrils comes forth smoke,
as from a boiling pot and burning rushes.
21 His breath kindles coals,
and a flame comes forth from his mouth.
22 In his neck abides strength,
and terror dances before him.
23 The folds of his flesh stick together,
firmly cast on him and immovable.
24 His heart is hard as a stone,
hard as the lower millstone.
25 When he raises himself up, the mighty are afraid;
at the crashing they are beside themselves.
26 Though the sword reaches him, it does not avail,
nor the spear, the dart, or the javelin.

PASSAGE CONT.

27 He counts iron as straw,
and bronze as rotten wood.
28 The arrow cannot make him flee;
for him, sling stones are turned to stubble.
29 Clubs are counted as stubble;
he laughs at the rattle of javelins.
30 His underparts are like sharp potsherds;
he spreads himself like a threshing sledge on the mire.
31 He makes the deep boil like a pot;
he makes the sea like a pot of ointment.
32 Behind him he leaves a shining wake;
one would think the deep to be white-haired.
33 On earth there is not his like,
a creature without fear.
34 He sees everything that is high;
he is king over all the sons of pride.”

42:1 Then Job answered the LORD and said:
2 “I know that you can do all things,
and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.
3 ‘Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?’
Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand,
things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.
4 ‘Hear, and I will speak;
I will question you, and you make it known to me.’
5 I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear,
but now my eye sees you;
6 therefore I despise myself,
and repent in dust and ashes.”

7 After the LORD had spoken these words to Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite: “My anger burns against you and against your two friends, for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has. 8 Now therefore take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves. And my servant Job shall pray for you, for I will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly. For you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.” 9 So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did what the LORD had told them, and the LORD accepted Job’s prayer.

STEP 1. WHAT DOES IT SAY?

NEED SOME HELP?

If you need some help with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 64.

Ⓐ Pray

Ⓑ Look Closely At

- Repetitions
- Images/metaphors
- Commands
- Warnings
- Contrasts
- Verbs—note past, present, and future. Who is doing this action?
- Big Bible Words
- Themes from the book

Ⓒ Look Structurally

- What is the tone of the passage?
- Divide the passage into its natural sections, one for each major thought.
- Create a heading or picture for each section
- Note key verses
- What does the structure reveal?
- What is the author's flow of thought?

Ⓓ A few questions to consider

- How does God begin his second speech to Job (40:7-14)?
- There are two mythical creatures described in these chapters.
- What features stand out to you? (especially 40:15-24 and 41:1-34)
- What effect do these descriptions have on you as a reader?
- How many scenes are there? What is the focus of each?

STEP 2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

NEED SOME HELP?

If you need some help with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 64.

Ⓐ Look at the context

- Read the passage that has come immediately before and that follows straight after.
- How does this impact how we understand our passage?

Ⓑ A few questions to consider

- The LORD opens both of his speeches (38:2-3 and 40:7-9) to Job in a similar way. In the first speech he reminds Job that his knowledge is not enough. How is God challenging Job here in the second speech?
- Why does God spend so much time describing Behemoth and Leviathan? What are we to make of these two creatures? How do these creatures relate to what God says in vv.7-14?
- This longer speech from the LORD is actually only half of what he says to Job. The first half comes in chs.38-39, and Job is given a short response at the beginning of ch.40. Compare 40:3-5 with 42:2-6. What has changed in Job's heart after God's second speech?

Ⓒ What's the Main Idea?

Ⓓ Stop to Pray

- Thank God for all he has revealed to you, ask him to help you see Him more clearly and love him more deeply through the next steps of your study.

PRAYER & PRAYER REQUESTS

Take some time to write down some prayer items and requests from those around you.

STUDY NOTES

40:7 “Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind...”

The LORD began speaking to Job at the opening of chapter 38 with a sublime poetic description of his creativity in making the universe. There Job encounters God’s incomprehensible knowledge and inescapable presence in ordering and sustaining a world of which Job himself is only a small part. At the end of God’s first speech, Job is subdued but not repentant, and so God begins his second speech. The focus in the first speech (chs.38-39) is on God’s wisdom in creating and sustaining life. The second speech (chs.40-41) focuses on God’s inexhaustible power in creating, and in holding back the chaos and evil which Job himself has experienced. God alone can save!

40:15 “Behold Behemoth! Which I made as I made you...”

Though the word “behemoth” has made it into the English language precisely because of this verse in Job, it’s worth noting that a contemporary translation of Hebrew *behemot* could be “Superbeast.” God is describing something that sounds a lot like a hippopotamus or great ox (which is certainly an awe-inspiring animal) but the description moves into the realm of mythical creatures as an embodiment of nature untamed by man, yet fully dependent upon its Creator.

41:1 “Can you draw out Leviathan with a fishhook?”

The second mythical creature we encounter is the sea monster Leviathan. With Behemoth we were still on fairly comfortable ground. The description of Leviathan - though it begins with a number of crocodile-like attributes - concludes with fantastic poetic descriptions that can only inspire terror (e.g. 41:18-21). We actually encounter Leviathan earlier in Job, though the creature is sometimes also called Rahab (3:8, 7:12, 9:13 and 26:12). In its ancient Mesopotamian context, Leviathan is a personification of the forces of chaos that threaten to undo the harmony and boundaries of the created world and oppose God’s good plans. In Psalm 74, for example, we read about the ordering of the waters and the defeat of Leviathan (Psa 74:12-17) within the context of the Temple’s destruction (Isaiah 27:1 also speaks about God’s defeat of Leviathan, this time within the context of Israel’s restoration). This power to save and restrain the evil of Leviathan gives the writer of Psalm 74 hope in the final delivery of God’s people.

Today, many would view chaos or disorder as a natural and neutral part of the universe but this is not the biblical view of the matter. Chaos, as the breakdown of God’s good created order, has a moral quality to it and is closely connected to the Adversary’s desire to un-make Job and sever his relationship with God. When a tsunami destroys an entire coast of fishing villages and the people living there, are we not witnessing the destructive power of Leviathan? This is precisely why Job cries out to God in the midst of his suffering: he knows it is wrong.

Here in God’s second speech to Job, Leviathan underscores our complete incapacity to control suffering, chaos, and death. It is, nonetheless, under God’s control, which is precisely why the LORD brings Job’s attention to its terrifying nature. Because of 41:34, some have concluded that Leviathan is actually a poetic description of the Satan who unleashes all the misfortune on Job in the opening chapters of the book. This is quite possible but it should be noted that the phrase “sons of pride” also occurs in Job 28:8 (translated as “proud beasts” there), which would seem to keep Leviathan within the earthly realm and leave the Satan in the divine council of heaven.

42:6 “Therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

There are two issues of clarification in this short utterance from Job. The first is having a better understanding of what Job means when he says “I despise myself.” Though Job is cowed by God’s awesome revelation from the whirlwind, and though he is in absolute misery, he is not endorsing the “maggot theology” of Bildad (25:6), or else he would not presume to speak at all. As the psalmist declares, God has in fact made humans “a little lower than the heavenly beings, and crowned them with glory” (Psa 8:5). It is also important to note that the word “myself” is not found in the Hebrew original and is an interpretive choice made by the ESV. A literal translation of the line would be “Because of this I spurn/despise, and repent in dust and ashes.” The question then would be, what is Job spurning?

STUDY NOTES

This question leads naturally into the second issue: if Job is a blameless and upright man, and if God himself tells Job's friends that Job has spoken what is right, then what is Job repenting of? Here too, an examination of the original Hebrew text is helpful. Often, repentance in the Old Testament is spoken of as "atoning for" a sin, or as "turning from" a life of sin back towards God (e.g. 2 Chron 7:14). That verb "to turn" (shub) is not used here in Job, and it is the friends who need to make the atoning sacrifices (42:8). Instead, in this verse we find the word nacham, which indicates regret or sorrow (cf. Gen 6:6 when God regrets making mankind). It is not that Job's actions and speech required him to turn from sin, but that in his suffering he has embittered his heart towards God and, in the awesome revelation of a perfect God, he wishes that he hadn't spoken so presumptuously, even if he didn't say anything wrong per se. It is a response fully consistent with a blameless and upright fear of the LORD, a response to the revelation of the LORD himself. Perhaps a better translation of the Hebrew would be "I spurn [what I have said], and I repent of it in dust and ashes."

42:10 "And the LORD restored the fortunes of Job..."

Having come this far, there is the danger of falling back into the quid pro quo mentality of Job's friends, as though Job has somehow earned the restoration of his fortunes through his own faithfulness. This is most certainly not the case. The gift of restoration is just that: a gift, graciously bestowed, completely unmerited. It is, in a very real sense, a foretaste of heaven. Though Job experienced tremendous suffering, it was not without a purpose, and God used it to bring Job closer to him and satisfy Job's soul. The message of the Gospel is that, even though we might suffer in unfathomable ways, we know that our Redeemer - Jesus Christ - lives, and that he has walked the path of suffering and triumphed over death so that when he returns all of creation will be restored.