

Title: Assignment 2 – Short Essay 2 (1000 words)

In 1000 words, what is your theological and pastoral understanding of ONE of the following:

- a. The Psalms?
- b. The book of Job?

Course: Introduction to the Old Testament

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DECLARATION

I certify that this ASSIGNMENT is my own work. I have acknowledged all material and sources used in it, and that I have not plagiarised in part or whole the work of others without stating the references.

THE BOOK OF JOB: MY THEOLOGICAL & PASTORAL UNDERSTANDING

Introduction

The book of Job contains an Old Testament story well-known among churchgoers. Many Christians from Sunday school onwards would be familiar with the tale of how Satan (or more properly, ‘The Accuser’^{1 2 3 4}) challenged YHWH about Job’s faithfulness, how YHWH allowed calamities to befall Job, and how Job remained righteous through it all and was eventually restored by YHWH.

Yet this is merely scratching the surface of the forty-two chapters of narrative and poetic utterances, which contain deep (and sometimes difficult) insights into the ways of God – but also a powerful and time-tested message for the hurting soul⁵.

Theology of Job

Job has often been cited to show YHWH’s complete control over every trial and trouble of life⁶ – even the Adversary cannot lay a finger on Job (and by extension, anyone loyal to YHWH) without YHWH’s explicit permission (Job 1:12 & 2:6)⁷.

It portrays YHWH as possessing supreme wisdom, foreknowledge and control over all events⁸ – hence, who is this finite Job to doubt The Almighty⁹? Rather than ever explaining to Job the

¹ Michael L. Brown, *Job: The Faith to Challenge God--A New Translation and Commentary* (MA/USA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2019), 337-342.

² Christopher Ash, *Trusting God in the Darkness: A Guide to Understanding the Book of Job* (USA: Crossway Books, 2021), Perlego Edition, Chapter 2 Do We Live in a Well-Run World?, Scene 1: The Lord’s Council Chamber (1:6 – 12).

³ Michael S. Heiser, *Demons: What the Bible Really Says About the Powers of Darkness* (Bellingham/USA: Faithlife Corporation, 2020), 76-80.

⁴ Michael S. Heiser, “The Absence of Satan in the Old Testament”, *Dr. Michael S. Heiser* (accessed 19-Jul-2022): <https://drmsch.com/the-absence-of-satan-in-the-old-testament/>

⁵ Ash, *Trusting God in the Darkness*, Perlego Edition, Chapter 1 Getting to Know the Book of Job.

⁶ John Piper, “Job: Wrestling with Suffering”, *Desiring God* (accessed 19-Jul-2022): <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/job-wrestling-with-suffering> [3] Nevertheless God still reigns over all the affairs of men, from the greatest to the smallest.]

⁷ Ash, *Trusting God in the Darkness*, Perlego Edition, Chapter 2 Do We Live in a Well-Run World?, Scene 4: Job’s Land (2:7b – 10).

⁸ Brown, *Job: The Faith to Challenge God*, 353-355.

⁹ Ash, *Trusting God in the Darkness*, Perlego Edition, Chapter 10 The One Who Is God.

background events which led to his suffering, YHWH reminds Job of His divine attributes – which I have noted when citing Job 38:1-4 & 40:1-2¹⁰.

I have also gleaned from the Book of Job some insights into the workings of the spiritual realm – such as Sons of God gathering before God’s presence (Job 1:6 & 2:1), who surely cannot be human beings as they were present at the Earth’s creation (Job 38:4-7). These passages shed light on other curious portions of the Bible that also feature heavenly sons in God’s council, such as Psalm 82 (and by extension its citation in John 10:34¹¹). Again, all these beings are fully under God’s authority (Job 15:15).

Pastoral Application of Job

The story of Job with its theme of human suffering has resonated with countless readers through the ages¹². Job’s steadfast trust in YHWH’s righteousness is an object lesson in persevering faith despite adversity (James 5:11). It has proven a salve to the hurting, reassurance to the doubting, and theodicy for the age-old problem of evil. I have even used it to address ‘natural evil’¹³ such as the storm which bereaved Job of his children (Job 1:18-19).

That said, I would stress the importance of emphasizing not just YHWH’s sovereign control over all things – but also His innate goodness. For the story of Job is not just forty-one chapters of YHWH coldly allowing Job to suffer – it concludes with YHWH’s goodness to Job in chapter forty-two. To expound on the former while neglecting the latter portrays a god who is all-powerful, but also capricious¹⁴.

Such would be of little comfort to someone on the receiving end of YHWH’s decrees:

¹⁰ Scott Thong, “Glowing Like Silver & Gold”, *Scott Thong* (accessed 18-Jul-2022): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D75Hnk21edQ> [9:20 – 10:32]

¹¹ I provide a brief overview in my 2021 essay submitted to Dr. Chong Siaw Fung: “Psalm 82 – Gods or Frauds?” For a thorough treatment, see the major influential work: Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* (Bellingham/USA: Lexham Press, 2015).

¹² Brown, *Job: The Faith to Challenge God*, 1-4.

¹³ Scott Thong, “Why God Permits Evil (Defending Our Faith)”, *Scott Thong* (accessed 18-Jul-2022): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lj8u_IWuE0o [22:08 – 24:40]

¹⁴ John Piper, “Muslims vs. Christians on the Sovereignty of God”, *Desiring God* (accessed 18-Jul-2022): <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/muslims-vs-christians-on-the-sovereignty-of-god>

“If He is not (in our sense) ‘good’ we shall obey, if at all, only through fear – and should be equally ready to obey an omnipotent Fiend.”¹⁵

Job’s suffering *without* Job’s redemption, as one tongue-in-cheek portrayal puts it, would be: “...the most horrible story I’ve ever heard.”¹⁶

Hence when illustrating YHWH’s omnipotence and omniscience, I make sure to pair them with His omnibenevolence – His certain promises of good for the believer (e.g. Job 42:12, Romans 8:28, Genesis 50:20, Acts 2:23-24¹⁷; or 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, Romans 5:3-5, Hebrews 12:5-6 & 12:10-11, 1 Peter 5:7¹⁸).

Conclusion

Few people wish to undergo suffering as Job did, even if it is through affliction that we are refined for our own future good (1 Peter 1:7, Proverbs 17:3, Isaiah 48:10, Job 23:10, Malachi 3:3¹⁹). Perhaps by studying the Book of Job, we can learn some of its lessons without personally experiencing them... God knows!

¹⁵ C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (NY/USA: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 33.

¹⁶ South Park, “South Park: The Book of Job”, *South Park Clips* (accessed 18-Jul-2022): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Z7afkc5CpU> [1:46 – 1:50]

¹⁷ Thong, “Glowing Like Silver & Gold”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D75Hnk21edQ> [11:44 – 13:55]

¹⁸ Scott Thong, “1 Peter 5 - Survival Kit for Hard Times”, *Scott Thong* (accessed 19-Jul-2022): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ggK0E4bbly> [31:29 – 35:16]

¹⁹ Scott Thong, “Trying Trials (1 Peter 1:6-7)”, *Scott Thong* (accessed 19-Jul-2022): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p1HIdqmSrEM> [39:52 – 41:33]

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