

A Fresh Look at the Book of Job - Part 1

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May 15, 2010

Well Good Afternoon everyone! It's certainly nice to see everybody again this Sabbath. And I'd like to send a special greeting to all those that are out there in DVD-land, as I like to call it, that will be hearing this message later. I guess since this is originating from Texas, I should say, "Howdy all!" to all those who will be seeing this later.

When I was a child growing up in the Church of God, I grew up in the Church of God. My parents were baptized about a year before I was born. And one day when I was a teenager, I was struggling with a difficult Scripture question. So I went to an elder that was in our congregation. He had been a close friend of my family for a number of years and I posed my question to him.

And in helping me understand the question that I was struggling with, he really taught me a lesson that day that has really helped me for the rest of my life in understanding the Bible. Because he looked at me that day and he said, "James," he said, "when you're dealing with a difficult Scripture, you've got to remember this one thing. And this will really help you out." He said, "You got to remember the principle that the Bible never contradicts itself. So what you've got to do is you've got to use the Scriptures that are plain and simple and straightforward, easy to understand to help you understand the difficult, hard to understand Scriptures." He said, "Because whatever the difficult, hard to understand Scriptures are saying, there's one thing you know for sure. And that's that they're not going to directly contradict the simple straightforward, easier to understand Scriptures." He said, "And if you use that principle that way, that'll always help guide you to the right conclusions and help you understand those Scriptures that are hard to figure out."

Because I think we're all familiar in the Church of God; that's kind of a basic principle of Biblical interpretation we're all familiar with. But if that's not utilized properly, we can really come up with some askew ideas. A common example of that I think we're all familiar with is in the Protestant world and how they look at the New Testament, how they formulate their doctrines about that.

What they typically do is they go straight to the writings of the apostle Paul and they'll start off with his writings. And as Peter told us, "He wrote some things difficult, hard to understand." And they start off by studying his writings and deciding what they think that means and what they think that Paul is saying. And what they'll then do is then turn around and read the Gospels and the General Epistles and the other parts of the Bible that are more straightforward and easier to understand and try to interpret them in the light of the ideas they've already come up with what they think Paul is trying to say. And what this winds up with is interpreting the Bible backwards because they're using the

difficult, hard to understand Scriptures to try to help interpret the straightforward ones and it winds up making everything askew and going backwards.

So in utilizing this principle what we need to realize is even us in the Church of God sometimes, even though we're very aware of this principle, we can sometimes mess up with this. We can sometimes, even though we're aware of this principle, actually wind up not properly using this particular principle and can sometimes mess up ourselves.

What I'd like to do today is look at a particular book in the Bible. Because sometimes I think if we don't utilize this principle properly, we can come up some incorrect conclusions, and sometimes miss some of the deeper lessons the book's trying to tell us by doing this in reverse. So what we're going to do today is look at this particular book of the Bible. In fact, this is going to be a two-part sermon where it's going to take two sermons to address all of this that we need to cover. But what we're going to do today is take a look at this particular book maybe from a different perspective than you have seen before. You might say, "Take a fresh look at it," because it's something that we're all familiar with. But we're going to take a look at it and maybe see a different perspective than we've seen in the past.

The book I'm talking about is the Book of Job. Now if you ask the average church member about the book of Job, "What is this book about? What's the main point this book's trying to teach us?" I'm willing to bet that a large number of people, if not the vast majority, would have a similar answer. They would all tell you, "Well, that's a book about self-righteousness. That's a book about a man who had a real big problem with self-righteousness. And God had to take him through these really difficult trials to really beat that problem out of him and to humble him to the point that he could become converted." Because the idea is he became converted at the end of the book at the end of all of these trials.

Now I'm sure we've all heard this various idea. It's been a popular idea taught in the Church of God for many years. But what I'd like to do today is let's take a look at this and the meaning of this of book maybe from a fresh perspective. To take a fresh look at this and see some things we might not have seen before. In fact, if you'd like a title for today's sermon, it's

A Fresh Look at the Book of Job, Part I

Because, as I mentioned, it's going to be a two-part series. We're not going to be able to cover everything today.

But what I'd like to suggest here and again I ask that as you look at this that you practice Proverbs 18:13 and hear the matter out before you answer it. Hear what I'm going to present today before you make a conclusion on it. And just look at this and think there might be a different perspective here than we've thought in the past.

Because what I'm going to suggest here is I think sometimes we look at this book and we formulate our ideas from it from what we might say is the more difficult, hard to understand Scriptures. We go into the areas where Job is in the midst of his trial. He's really upset. The weight of all of it is getting on top of him and he winds up lashing out in anger. He questions God's judgment. He makes some very outrageous statements. And I think sometimes we can base our view of the whole book based upon those things and then turn around and try to interpret the foundation of the book. In the beginning it explains why all this happened and try to interpret it in that light rather than doing the opposite. And I think if we look at it from a different way, we may come up with some different conclusions.

So with all that in mind, and again I just ask that you test this out and hear where I'm going here and consider this from a different possible perspective.

But let's think about this. Like I said, I mentioned before if you asked a typical church member, "What is the Book of Job about?" what you're likely to hear is that's a book about self-righteousness because oftentimes we pair those two together to the point to that when we think of self-righteousness Job's thought of as the poster-child for that problem. And when his name is brought up that's oftentimes what people think of him as.

Let's start off looking in the New Testament at how Job is remembered and see how this compares with our perceptions of him. Turn with me to James chapter 5. We're going to start in James chapter 5 and verse 11. James chapter 5 and we're going to read verse 11. It says:

James 5:11. Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end *intended by* the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful. (NKJ)

Now notice here that Job isn't remembered for a single word. He's associated with a single word of character. It's translated here in the New King James as *perseverance*. Now a lot of translations of the Bible refer to this as "the patience of Job." It can be translated those two ways depending upon what version of the Bible you have. And if you think about it, there's a common colloquial saying in our society today that's based upon this particular Scripture. People oftentimes refer to the "patience of Job." And they'll refer to another individual and say, "Man, that individual, they've got the patience of Job." Well, this is where that idea comes from.

But let's look at what the Bible is trying to say in this because notice this is going to be quite different than what we oftentimes think of as showing. If we look at the Greek word here translated either as *patience* or *perseverance*, the Greek word is *hupomone*. It's *h-u-p-o-m-o-n-e*. It's Strong's number 5281. And according to The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament by Spiro Zodhiates, here's how it's defined. *Hupomone* is defined as "a bearing up under, patience, endurance as to things or circumstances. *Hupomone* is associated with hope and refers to that quality of

character which does not allow one to surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial."

Now think about that. This is the quality of how Job is remembered in the New Testament. He's not remembered for a problem he had. He's not remembered for self-righteousness. He's remembered for his ability to endure successfully a hard trial.

Now, let's also look at another part of the Bible that remembers him kind of after the Book itself of the story. Turn with me to Ezekiel chapter 14 and we'll look at another section of Scripture that remembers Job after the fact. In Ezekiel chapter 14, we're going to start reading in verse 12. It says:

Ezekiel 14:12. The word of the Lord came again to me, saying:

13) "Son of man, when a land sins against Me by persistent unfaithfulness, I will stretch out My hand against it; I will cut off its supply of bread, send famine on it, and cut off man and beast from it.

14) "Even [though] these three men, [Now notice this list!] Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness," says the Lord God. (NKJ)

Now think of this with a picture that's being painted here. God's making an obvious contrast here: He's saying, 'If these people were totally evil and doing wrong, even if these three righteous men here.'" So by virtue of the comparison here, He's kind of saying "Even if some of the most righteous men who have ever lived were here, they would only deliver themselves." So he's being characterized as a very righteous man.

But now notice who he's compared to! Noah and Daniel! These are two individuals straight out of Hebrews 11—oftentimes called The Spiritual Hall of Fame. We oftentimes refer to it as The Faith Chapter, but if you look at what's covered there, it's the great heroes of faith. It's The Spiritual Hall of Fame that's referred to.

Now Noah and his story is directly mentioned. He's mentioned by name and it's expounded—his example in Hebrews 11. Now Daniel is not mentioned specifically by name. But he's obviously referenced there because when it talks about several of the things accomplished by faith, one of the things that's mentioned is "stop the mouths of lions." Now who's famous for being thrown in a lions' den and not being eaten? That would be Daniel.

So obviously what we have here is Job being compared with two heroes from Hebrews 11 and he's compared right with them—"even if these three men were here." Now again, a very different characterization than we're oftentimes used to in thinking about Job!

With that in mind now, let's go back and look at the actual Book of Job itself. We're going to go to Job chapter 1.

As I mentioned before here, I said it's my personal opinion—and it's kind of the idea that I'm putting across today—that in the sections of Job's trial where he is really upset with God, when he's claiming he's more righteous than God and God's been unfair and such, and we'll all be familiar with reading some of this. It's some very outrageous comments. I'm suggesting today that those are some of the more difficult, hard to understand sections of this book. And to properly understand those, I think we need to use the foundation of some of the other sections of this book that are a little more straightforward, a little more cut and dried.

And what we're going to read through here is the first two chapters to start off with because this gives us the foundation of this book. It explains how all this came about and it explains to us why. And as we read through this, I'm going to point out a number of things as we go through. And the reason I'm doing that is we're going to refer back to a number of points as we kind of look at this as a jigsaw puzzle and kind of put a number of things together. Because as we read through the narrative I'm going to call attention to a number of things we're going to come back to.

Let's start in Job chapter 1 in verse 1:

Job 1:1. There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil. (NKJ)

Now notice what an incredible rating he gets starting off with this book. It starts off immediately by telling us how incredibly righteous this man is. Now also note as we go through this, we're going to read these exact words three times in two chapters. The next two times that we read these it will be directly out of the mouth of God.

Now if we can pick up in verse 2:

Job 1:2. And seven sons and three daughters were born to him.

3) Also, his possessions were seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred female donkeys, and a very large household, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the East.

4) Now his sons would go and feast *in their* houses, each on his *appointed* day, and would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them.

5) So it was, when the days of feasting had run their course, that Job would send and sanctify 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 sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." Thus Job did regularly.

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) And the Lord said to Satan, "From where do you come?" So Satan answered the Lord and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it."

8) Then the Lord said to Satan, (NKJ)

And notice this!

Job 1:8b. "Have you considered My servant Job, that *there is* none like him on the earth, (NKJ)

God is stating he is the most righteous man on the planet at the time this was stated. And notice that He continues on:

Job 1:8 continued. a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?" (NKJ)

That's the second time we've made this comment. As we all know when God repeats something numerous times, it's important! He's trying to make sure that we get it and that we notice this point. This is the second time this has been mentioned. We're going to see it one more time in these next two chapters here.

Now picking up in verse 9:

Job 1:9. So Satan answered the Lord and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing?

10) "Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around 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 now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!"

12) So the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has *is* in your power; only do not lay a hand on his *person*." So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord. (NKJ)

Now again we'll come back to this later, but just take note of the fact that God just directly challenged Satan on Job's righteousness. That's how He pointed him out. And when Satan, the very accuser of the Brethren, responded to this, he didn't make an accusation. What he said was, "You just haven't turned the volume up high enough. Let me at him. Let me go after him with everything I've got and then we'll see him mess up." So just notice that. We're going to come back to this later, but I'm just calling attention to this as we go through.

Now, let's pick up in verse 13:

Job 1:13. Now there was a day when his sons and daughters *were* eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house;

14) and a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them,

15) "when the Sabeans raided *them* and took them away—indeed they have killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you!"

16) While he *was* still speaking, another also came 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 still speaking, another also came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three bands, raided the camels and took them away, yes, and killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you!"

18) While he was still speaking, another also came and said, "Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house,

19) "and suddenly a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on 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 he fell to the ground and worshiped. (NKJ)

Now notice his response after having the most horrible day you could imagine here.

Job 1:21. And he said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." (NKJ)

Incredible response isn't it for a day like that? Now notice verse 22:

Job 1:22. In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong. (NKJ)

One other thing I want to call attention to as we're reading through this is what I'm going to call the *timeline*—in other words, the sequence of events. As we see God started off challenged Satan. Satan said, "Hey, let me go after him." God allows him to and he pulls all of this, but notice at the very beginning God tells us how incredibly righteous he is. He brags to Satan about it. He challenges him on it. And now He's even saying, "At this point and all that has happened, Job hasn't messed up yet." Now I'm obviously not claiming he's sinless. Obviously, he's a sinner like all the rest of us. But my point is He's making a big point of saying, "He hasn't significantly messed up at this point." We're going to notice the timeline because that's going to come into play later.

Now let's pick up in chapter 2 verse 1.

Job 2:1. Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord.

2) And the Lord said to Satan, "From where do you come?" So Satan answered the Lord and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it."

3) Then the Lord said to Satan, (NKJ)

And we go for the third time!

Job 2:3b. "Have you considered My servant Job, that *there is* none like him on the earth, (NKJ)

This is the second time God has stated he's the most righteous man on the planet at this point.

And now notice the next comment we're going to read. This is the third time we've read this.

Job 2:3 continued. a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil? And still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause." (NKJ)

In other words, God is pointing out here we are later in the timeline and God's saying, "He still hasn't messed up yet." Again, that's significant! We're going to come back to that later.

But pick up in verse 4:

Job 2:4. So Satan answered the Lord and said, "Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life.

5) "But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face!" (NKJ)

In other words, Satan's saying, "Just let me turn the volume up even higher! Let me go after him even some more! Now we'll see him mess up."

Notice what God says next.

Job 2:6. And the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, he *is* in your hand, but spare his life." (NKJ)

Now another important thing we need to note in all of this is as the negotiation has played out here between God and Satan, by the time this is done at this point in the Scripture we just read, the only stated restriction that God has left here is "Just don't kill him." Now think about that! He said, "You can go after everything. You can go after his family. You can go after his possessions. You can go after his health. You can do anything. Just don't kill him. I need him alive when this is done." We're going to come back to that point as well.

Now pick up in verse 7:

Job 2:7. So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord, and struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.

8) And he took for himself a potsherd with which to scrape himself while he sat in the midst of the ashes.

9) Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!"

10) But he said to her, (NKJ)

Now notice his response to this. Again, right in line with everything else we've read so far.

Job 2:10b. "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" (NKJ)

And notice again this last statement in verse 10.

Job 2:10 continued. In all this Job did not sin with his lips. (NKJ)

Again, speaking to a timeline again. After all this is played out, now Satan's gone after his health. Now his wife had an outburst. All of this has happened. It's making very clear to us to understand as of this point in the story; he still hasn't messed up yet. That's significant, because, as we all know, later he does charge God with wrong. He does sin with his lips. But realize, let's notice that timeline. That's going to come into significance as we go through the story.

Now let me logically ask you a question. We just read the behind the scenes story as to how this all came about, how this trial was originated. We've even read why.

Now let's think of that in terms of the common belief that the real reason why all this happened was a man's secret sin of self-righteousness that had to be beat out of him. Did we read a single word of that? If we just take the Scriptures for what they said—and I'm familiar with a lot of the arguments where we try to make that match with this idea. We're going to talk about a lot of that today. But let's just take what we just read at face value. Did we read anything that matches that? No, we just read the exact opposite. Didn't we?

Let's just summarize what we just read. God started off this by saying, "Satan, have you noticed My servant Job? He's the most righteous man on the planet. He's a blameless and upright man who fears the Lord and shuns evil." And He stated it multiple times for us to see. And even as the trial played out, He kept saying, "He still hasn't messed up. He still hasn't messed up. He still hasn't messed up."

And what we find here is he was chosen for this trial because of his righteousness, not because of his sin! That's what we just read. Didn't we?

Now if you think about that, it's quite different. This is kind of why I'm saying sometimes I think we try to make these Scriptures match the ideas that we get when we just look at his self-righteous outbursts. And again, I'm not saying his questioning God's judgment's not self-righteous, but we're going to look at that in context as we go through this series.

Right now, let's think about that context. The common belief that's oftentimes taught today is this all happened to him because of the sin he had. And it's oftentimes called the sin of self-righteousness. Let's look at that argument because that's addressed directly in this book.

Let's look over to Job chapter 4 and we're going to read verse 7. Job chapter 4 and verse 7 now, this is Eliphaz. He's kind of the lead person of Job's three friends as they're referred to in the Bible. We'll actually look at next time what the Bible actually means when it uses the word *friends* for them. That's getting out of the story here. But this is Eliphaz speaking to Job. I'm going to read verse 7.

Job 4:7. "Remember now, who ever perished being innocent? Or where were the upright ever cut off?"

8) Even as I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same.

9) By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of His anger they are consumed. (NKJ)

I mean if you follow the logic of what Eliphaz is saying here is "Job, bad things don't happen to good people. You know? Severe adversity only happens to sinners." That's what he's saying. I mean he asked the question, "When have the righteous ever perished?"

Well let's think about it. We could start with righteous Abel in the very beginning of the Bible. He gives a good sacrifice that God's happy with and pleased with. His brother, Cain, gives the one that God's not happy with. Yet God allows Cain to kill Abel. So here the righteous perished and died.

We could look at John the Baptist who Jesus Christ Himself described as the most righteous man who'd ever lived up to that point. How did he die? His head was chopped off. He was murdered.

Or we could look at most of the apostles and the prophets. The vast majority of them were martyred in the pursuit of doing what God wanted them to do.

So have the righteous even perished? Plenty of times!

Let's also look at couple of other examples because we'll see that this is a major theme of what Job's friends were arguing. Turn with me over to Job chapter 8. Job chapter 8, we're going to start in verse 1. Now this is Bildad who's speaking here. He's one of the other three friends. Just to be humorous: it's often said that Bildad could be called the shortest man in the Bible because he's Bildad the Shuhite (shoe-height). You know, he's so short (laughter)—had to be a little humorous there! But in Job chapter 8 verse 1, it says:

Job 8:1. Then Bildad the Shuhite answered and said:

2) "How long will you speak these *things*, and the words of your mouth *be like* a strong wind?"

3) Does God subvert judgment? Or does the Almighty pervert justice? (NKJ)

Notice what he says now!

Job 8:4. If your sons have sinned against Him, he has cast them away for their transgression.

5) If you would earnestly seek God and make your supplication to the Almighty,

6) If you *were* pure and upright, surely now He would awake for you, and prosper your rightful [habitation]. (NKJ)

What he's basically implying is, "Well, your kids all got killed because they're sinners. That's why they all died. And this trial's coming upon you because of your sins."

Well, we read the behind the scenes story. Did it tell us anything about his children being killed because of their sins? I mean it doesn't tell us much about them, but what it told us was they died as a result of the negotiation between God and Satan as a part of carrying out this trial. It's kind of the opposite of what these guys are saying!

Let's also turn over to Job chapter 22. We're going to look at a section where Eliphaz is speaking again here. And he goes beyond just implying that this has to be because of sins. He starts filling in the details and telling what all he thinks Job's sins are! Job chapter 22 and we're going to start reading in verse 5.

Job 22:5. *Is not your wickedness great, and your iniquity without end?*

6) For you have taken pledges from your brother for no reason, and stripped [them] naked of their clothing.

7) You have not given the weary water to drink, and you have withheld bread from the hungry. (NKJ)

I mean he's just throwing everything at him, telling him what a horrible person he is!

Job 22:8. But the mighty man possessed the land, and the honorable man dwelt in it.

9) You have sent widows away empty, and the strength of the fatherless was crushed.

10) Therefore snares are all around you, and sudden fear troubles you,

11) Or darkness *so that* you cannot see; and an abundance of water covers you. (NKJ)

In other words, he's saying, "Job, you've been a heinous sinner and that's why all this is happening."

Now see he lays out very similar logic. But what did God think of this? God speaks to this in chapter 42. Let's turn over to Job chapter 42 and we'll see what God thought of their arguments that this was all because of Job's sins as to why this was brought upon him. Job chapter 42 and verse 7:

Job 42:7. And so it was, after the Lord had spoken these words to Job, that the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me *what is* right, as My servant Job *has*. (NKJ)

Now notice that He condemns outright what the three friends were arguing. He also says, "Job was speaking the truth." That's an interesting thing we'll come back to as well.

Now pick up in verse 8.

Job 42:8. "Now therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, go to My servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and My servant Job shall pray for you. For I will accept him, lest I deal with you *according to your* folly; because you have not spoken of Me *what is* right, as My servant Job *has*." (NKJ)

Now we have that statement again—the second time to make sure that we get it.

Now think about this. As we just read, Job's three friends put out the argument of: The reason that all these calamities are happening to you, or the reason this trial is happening, is because of your sins. Now it's been commonly argued in the Church of God that these guys were wrong, but we also would turn around and say, "Well, the real reason this really happened is because the secret sin of self-righteousness that he had to have beaten out of him."

What's different about those two arguments? Nothing. They're exactly the same. This was brought upon you because of your sins and here's what they are. Now if God summarily dismisses this and says, "This is wrong," does it make any sense that they could be wrong in arguing that, but we could argue the exact same thing and somehow magically we're right? Does that make any sense? No. If God says, "The argument is wrong" Himself, then it's wrong regardless of who argues it and regardless of how many people argue it. It's wrong regardless of how dogmatically it's argued. It's just wrong. We just have to accept that because God Himself has said, "This is wrong." Again, this is one of those simple, straightforward Scriptures we've got to use to guide us through this book.

Now a lot of you are probably sitting there thinking, "What a minute, Smyda! Doesn't God Himself spend several chapters correcting Job for being righteous in his own eyes and questioning God's judgment?" Yes, He does. "And doesn't Elihu himself, who's kind of also the hero of the book, doesn't he correct Job for some of this?" Yes, he does. There's a significant difference between what God and Elihu are arguing and what Job's three friends did.

Because think about it! Would it make any sense for God Himself to condemn Job's three friends, not only just tell them they were wrong, tell them He was ticked at them and say, "You don't want me to measure this back to you. You don't want me to treat you as you have treated him and handle you according to your actions." Would it make sense for Him to do that and then turn around and argue the exact same thing? No it doesn't really make sense. Obviously, God perceived He was arguing something different than Job's three friends were. It wouldn't make any sense otherwise.

So let's take a look at what Elihu argued because he's also one who corrected Job for being righteous in his own eyes. But let's look a significant difference because we're going to see what the difference is between the perspectives the two of them are coming from. Turn back over to Job chapter 32. Job chapter 32, we're going to start in verse 1.

Job 32:1. So these three men ceased answering Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes.

2) Then the wrath of Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram, was aroused against Job; his wrath was aroused because he justified himself rather than God. (NKJ)

We're going to focus on that. We're going to come back to that point. Elihu's upset with Job because he justified himself rather than God. He basically said God was unjust.

But notice now in verse 3.

Job 32:3. Also against his three friends his wrath was aroused, because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job. (NKJ)

In other words, they condemned him and didn't know what they were talking about.

But there's a significant difference here. And here it is:

Job's three friends were arguing cause and effect. They were basically saying, "These trials got brought upon you," in other words, "the reason this happened was because of your sins. And this has been brought upon you as a punishment or as a correction for those sins." They were arguing cause and effect.

Elihu is not. And neither is God.

Because you notice I pointed out the timeline as we read through the beginning of this. Elihu says he's upset at Job for justifying himself rather than God. And we won't take the time to go through it, because I think we're all very familiar with it.

But you know God goes on for four chapters correcting Job! And what's the content of what He says?

Job 38:4. "Where were you when I formed the foundations of the earth? [Can you tell Me how I did it]?" (Paraphrased.)

Job 38:11. "Can you tell me why the sea stops, the ocean waves stop on the beach at a certain point and go out? (Paraphrased.)

"Can you tell me how all this was done? Because I was there and did it and if you know so much, tell me." He's pointing out to Job, "You shouldn't be questioning My judgment." That's the problem.

When did that happen? Well, if we pay attention to the timeline, that happens much later under the weight of all the trials that Job was going through.

Elementary logic requires that if you're trying to establish a cause-and-effect relationship, the cause has to predate the effect. You can't argue that "A is the reason why B came about," "A caused B", but then if you examine and you realize that A came into existence long after B had been already established and been around, that's not a sensible argument. Is it?

That's the big difference here. What Elihu and God were correcting Job for was not a problem that caused this trial. It was how he responded to it! It was how he dealt with all that was happening to him and mistakes that he made after the fact. They are not arguing cause and effect. That is a major difference.

And again, to completely understand in a proper context the mistakes that Job made and the comments that he made, we have to look at that in the context in which it happened. And we're not going to do that today. We're going to look at that next time because that's a whole other subject by itself to develop all that.

But just understand the main difference here is they're not arguing cause and effect. It's Job's response to the trial that was the problem. It is not what caused it. It's not a "pre-existing condition" as the insurance industry would refer to it as, because it didn't pre-exist.

Now let's think about this from another angle. Because I think a lot of times we look back at the beginning of the book, again from the idea of this being about self-righteousness. And then we try to get those first couple chapters and what they tell us to agree with this understanding—kind of looking at this from a backwards perspective in my opinion.

Now let's look at couple of common ideas that are taught in terms of how to try to make these agree with each other. Let's analyze them and take them apart piece by piece. And I think we might learn some interesting things along the way here.

Now, as we pointed out as we went through the beginning of the book, God starts off the book by pointing out how righteous Job is. He says that he is a blameless and upright man who fears God and shuns evil. He says it three times! States twice that he's the most righteous man on the planet! Points out that He chose him for this trial because of his righteousness.

Now a common argument that I think we've all heard in the Church of God goes like this:

Well, see you have to understand the righteousness referred to there, that's just physical righteousness. That's not spiritual righteousness like we would think of conversion. That's just the efforts he did on his own physically.

And that's kind of how the argument goes because the idea then is that he wasn't converted until the very end of the book when he repents of the mistakes he made along the way. Well, let's examine that idea. Let's examine this idea? Can a person be a blameless and upright man who fears God and shuns evil and God brag about it and they accomplish that through their physical efforts? Does that square with what we know about the Bible? Let's examine that idea because we're going to come at this and spend a good deal of time coming at this from several different angles. And my point here to just kind of see if we look at this from a number of different angles, we'll keep coming up with the same conclusion.

Now let's first of all kind of look at some basic Scriptures I think we've all examined. We've looked at many times and particularly we would have looked at as we were starting to come to conversion ourselves, when we were understanding the need to be baptized and to receive God's holy spirit. During that process in our lives there are a lot of basic Scriptures that we looked at in coming to understand the subject. Let's look at a couple of these and ask some basic questions here.

Turn with me to Romans chapter 8. We're going to look at Romans chapter 8. Let's go to a very familiar Scripture here on this subject. Romans chapter 8 and verse 7, it says:

Romans 8:7. Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God; (NKJ)

Or as many translations translate this as "hostile."

Romans 8:7. Because the carnal mind *is* [hostile] against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, [neither] indeed can be. (NKJ)

What it's telling us is on our own physical carnal minds we're not capable of following God's Law. We have a natural aversion to it. This is kind of who we are as people.

And I'm sure we've all looked at numerous times, if you look at ancient Israel in the Old Testament, aren't they a big, huge, research clinical trial, you might say, to demonstrate this principle? Because God didn't ask them to obey on the spirit of the Law, as we would call it in the New Testament. He asked them to obey with the letter of the Law.

How well did they do? They failed miserably, didn't they? He just kept having us in and out of captivity back and forth because they never sustained it for any length of time. Even bringing them out of Egypt, they saw all the miracles that took place; they were delivered God's Law; Moses was on the mountain just a short amount of time and what did they do? They build a golden calf!

Isn't that the lesson of the Old Testament? They keep doing that because they can't get it right. Isn't that what we learned as to why we have to be converted is because we aren't capable of living this on our own? That's why we have to have God's holy spirit to do it because we can't do that by ourselves.

Let's also look at this from another angle. Job is referred to as a blameless and upright man, referred to by God Himself several times. By biblical definition, how do we become blameless in God's eyes? How does that happen? Can we do that physically?

Let's look up at the beginning of the chapter here, Romans chapter 8 and verse 1. And we're going to read how we do this by biblical definition.

Romans 8:1. *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus,* (NKJ)

No condemnation—in other words, they're blameless?

Romans 8:1b. who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

2) For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

3) For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God *did* by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,

4) that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (NKJ)

What this is telling us is the way that we become blameless in God's sight, the way that that's accomplished; it's receiving Jesus Christ's sacrifice. And it's receiving the holy spirit so that we can start obeying God and living that way of life. That's how that's accomplished. That's how we reach that because we don't do that physically. That's not how that works.

Let's also look at a couple of angles because we're going to keep coming at this point from a number of different perspectives. And I think we'll keep coming back to the same conclusion.

Let's turn back over to Romans chapter 3. We're going to look at another very common Scripture that, again, we oftentimes look at when we're coming to understand baptism and the need for conversion. Romans chapter 3, we're going to start reading in verse 9.

Romans 3:9. What then? Are we better *than they*? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. 10) As it is written: (NKJ)

And notice some of these phrases we're about to read here.

Romans 3:10b. "There is none righteous, no, not one; (NKJ)

There are no exceptions!

Romans 3:11. There is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God.
12) They have all [gone out of the way]; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one."
13) "Their throat *is* an open tomb; with their tongues they have practiced deceit"; "The poison of asps *is* under their lips";
14) "Whose mouth *is* full of cursing and bitterness."
15) "Their feet *are* swift to shed blood;
16) Destruction and misery *are* in their ways;
17) And the way of peace they have not known." (NKJ)

Now particularly this last phrase because we're going to point out something here:

Romans 3:18. "There is no fear of God before their eyes." (NKJ)

Now notice it said there are no exceptions. Everybody who's carnal doesn't follow God because we can do that on our own. But notice how it describes the carnal person who doesn't have God's holy spirit.

Romans 3:18. "There is no fear of God before their eyes." (NKJ)

How is Job described? "One who fears God and shuns evil." How did that happen? How did a carnal person who has no fear of God in him wind up being pointed out and bragged about how much he fears God? How did that come about?

Notice oftentimes, like I said, we make the argument that well this is just physical effort. This is physical righteousness. Well, let's think about that for a moment. Let's turn over to Isaiah chapter 64. We'll look at how God views our physical righteousness, the efforts that we can do on our own. Isaiah chapter 64, we're going to read verse 6.

Isaiah 64:6. But we are all like an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. (NKJ)

Now if you look at the Hebrew that's translated here as *filthy rags*, the meaning it's getting at—and this is a graphic example, but it's directly what the Bible's referring to here—soiled menstrual rags are really what this means and what this is referring to.

Now think about this. And I apologize, this is kind of a gross example, but again this is right from the meaning of the Bible and I just want us to think about this. Does it make sense that God called Satan over and said, "Hey, Satan! Look at my soiled menstrual rag here! Isn't this impressive?" and bragged about it? Does it make sense that God would do that because God was holding up Job and bragging about his righteousness? Now if this was all something he did on his own physical effort. You know without God's holy spirit and not being converted. Is God going to brag about that? Because He tells

us directly, He doesn't place a lot of value in our physical righteousness. He doesn't think very highly of it at all.

Let's also look at this from another angle. Like I said, we're going to keep coming at this point from several different points just to make sure that we kind of establish this and see a trend here.

Let's turn back over to James chapter 5 and verse 11. This is where we started off. James chapter 5 and verse 11, I'm not going to reread the verse because we just read that. But I am going to review the meaning here of—I mentioned the word that translated as either *perseverance* or *patience* is the Greek word *hupomone* because we're going to learn some interesting things from this that speak to this point.

Again, *hupomone* is *h-u-p-o-m-o-n-e*. It's Strong's number 5281. And The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament by Spiro Zodhiates defines it as "a bearing up under, patience, endurance as to things or circumstances.... *Hupomone* is associated with hope and refers to that quality of character which does not allow one to surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial."

Now when you think about that definition, this is obvious referring to Job going through this horrendous trial. It directly speaks to you've heard of him and his ability to go through this. It's obviously referring to his time throughout this book.

Now let's ask the question: How does one develop *hupomone* in their lives? How does that come about? The Bible answers that for us and it says some very telling things that we'll see here.

Let's turn over to James chapter 1, just a couple pages over here, and we're going to see the Bible answer this question for us. James chapter 1, we're going to read verse 2.

James 1:2. My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3) knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. (NKJ)

Now the Greek word there is also *hupomone*. It's saying the testing of faith produces *hupomone*.

James 1:4. But let patience [or *hupomone*] have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. (NKJ)

So how does a person develop *hupomone* in their lives? By having their faith tested and it's also something that develops them into perfection as a Christian.

Now we all know what faith is. That's a quality that we get when we're converted because it's a fruit and it's a gift of God's holy spirit.

And if developing *hupomone* results from testing of that faith, it's only the converted that are going to develop *hupomone* because that's the only people who can have faith!

You just follow the logic!

You can't develop *hupomone* if you don't have faith.

And you can't have faith if you're not converted.

It's just the common logic we know from the Bible.

So how could Job ever do this if he wasn't converted? How would that make any sense? By biblical definition, he can't! He has to have had God's holy spirit throughout this for this to be possible.

Let's also look at this from another angle as well. Now having grown up in the Church of God, I have been ever since I was a child attending the Church of God and was, obviously, later baptized as a member. But I've been a kind of a student of the Bible, you might say, ever since I was a kid. And I've been a particular fan of the Book of Job literally since I was a teenager. In fact, I can honestly say, "This is probably the only sermon that I've ever given in my life that I can literally say I've been preparing for this for over twenty-five years!" Because literally I've been a major fan of this book and it's been a pet subject of mine ever since I was a teenager.

And as a result of that and having heard most of my lifetime of the idea taught that Job was not converted till the end of the book, I got kind of a pet nickname I use for the argument that I'd just like to share today to illustrate a point. I like to refer to it as "The Entrance Exam to Kindergarten Argument."

And here's why I say that: Now, when we all first get baptized and get converted, the Bible refers to us as "babes in Christ"—like we're little children, spiritually speaking. And basically, tells us as we grow and mature as a Christian, we're like children who grow into adults, into adulthood.

Now if you look at kind of how children are raised and educated through our educational system in the United States, we start off in kindergarten. That's normally where we start off in school. And as we're taught and developed, we grow and we bash through the grades and we go up through high school and then move into adults.

Well, if you think about that, if you kind of follow the example, the idea of being a "babe in Christ," if Job is not converted until the end of the book, that's when he would start being a "babe in Christ." That would therefore be when he would start kindergarten is when he was first converted. If these trials are what he has to go through to be basically humble to the point that he could start to be converted, this is, therefore, "The Entrance Exam to Kindergarten." In other words, this is what he had to go through to even start kindergarten, if you think about that.

Now let's back off and make some other observations I think we can all make just from our own lives and from people that we've known in the Church. Now the average Church of God member today has been in the Church for decades. Most people have been ten, twenty, thirty years in the Church. There are certainly exceptions to that but if you look at the overall population of the Church of God, it's a seasoned group.

Now if you look back over the years of your life as a Christian, I'm sure when you first got converted, when you first got baptized and received God's holy spirit, soon afterwards I'm willing to bet you got hit with a trial because that's what typically happens. And when that first hit you, you probably thought your world was being rocked! That was tough and you didn't realize conversion was going to be this tough.

But over time and over the years, you've had more and more trials as you've grown as a Christian. In fact, if you've been in the Church for decades, if you look at the trials that you've faced in the last couple of years and then you look back to what you first had when you first got baptized, you probably look back and think, "Man! Those trials were nothing to some of the stuff I've been dealing with the last few years."

In fact, generally speaking, if you just kind of look back over your own life and the lives of other Christians that you've known, you'll probably make a basic observation. And that is: Over time—you started off with generally kindergarten level trials. And then as you've grown and matured as a Christian, generally speaking again—I'm not saying this is always going to be the case—but just generally speaking, there was a gradual growing of the intensity of the types of trials and the severity of trials that you dealt with, because it's very similar to our education analogy.

You don't test kindergarteners on algebra, trigonometry and U.S. history. You test high school students with that. Kindergarteners can't deal with that. What do you teach in kindergarten? Well, that's A, B, C's and how to count and how to play with other kids and maybe how to write your name and things of that nature. And as you grow and mature, the material gets tougher and tougher. So the tests that come with that get tougher and tougher as that material is growing and as you're developing.

Now think of that now in terms of Job's trials. The idea that he wasn't converted until the end of the book leads us to believe that all the trials that he went through were basically the Entrance Exam to Kindergarten. Now, as I pointed out when we went through the initial first couple of chapters, when the negotiation between God and Satan was done, the only stated restriction that God said you can't do is "Just don't kill him." Now think about that! If the Entrance Exam to Kindergarten is a trial so severe that the only limitation placed upon Satan in carrying it out is "Just don't kill him," how do you ratchet that up in intensity as this guy grows? As he grows and matures up through the grades, how do you increase this? If that's pre-kindergarten, what are you going to do this guy when he gets into high school? Think about that! Because if this is the very beginning of kindergarten and the only stated restriction is "Just don't kill him. I need him alive when this is done," how do you ratchet up the intensity? You can't! If you remove the restriction of "Just don't kill him," he's soon going to be dead. The objective here is to

build character. Dead people don't build character if they're dead. It defeats the purpose.

If you think about that logically, this is obviously not The Entrance Exam to Kindergarten. It's not possible! In fact, I think a more accurate analogy with this is this wasn't grade school. This wasn't even high school. This was a very advanced lesson this man was going through. It's more analogous to graduate school. This was a man getting his Ph.D. in godly character. And the Book of Job that we have preserved for us today is the doctoral thesis that accompanied that Ph.D.

I think that's a more accurate way to look at this, because again how would you ratchet that up? How would you increase it if this was kindergarten? You can't! Could any of us handle a trial so severe that God said, "Just don't kill him"? "You can throw everything at him simultaneously, just don't kill him!" I wouldn't want to sign up for that. I doubt many of us have ever been through anything like that or could handle something like that.

Again, this was a man in grad school. This is a story about a man receiving his Ph.D. in godly character. The Book of Job we have preserved for us today is the doctoral thesis that accompanied that Ph.D.

Let's also look at one other argument here. If you'll turn with me back over to Job chapter 1, as I mentioned before, I think some of the misunderstandings of this book take place when we start off focusing on some of Job's mistakes, the outrageous comments he makes, his lashing out at God, his questioning God's judgment and His justice and saying that "God is not fair." We look at all those things and he makes some very outrageous comments. And it's very shocking to our ears when we read that and think about it.

But we have to view those things in context. And again, we're going to look at that next time to get a more accurate view of the context of what all this man was going through so we can have a little better feel for how to really view those things. Again, I'm not saying by any means it's not self-righteous to say the things that he did. It is and he's corrected for that. But to have an appropriate view of it, we have to view it in context.

But I think a lot of times what happens is we look at those things and it's so shocking to us and we decide, "Okay. Well, this is obviously why this must have happened." We formulate that idea and then we go back to the beginning of the book. And we look at things like how he's described as so incredibly righteous and it's hard to make it all make sense.

So to make it come together we think, "Okay. Well, this had to be physical righteousness. Couldn't be spiritual!" Because again what happens is, we start tweaking Scriptures and massaging them to try to get it to match with a preconceived idea.

It's very similar to what the Protestants do with the writings of Paul. Start off with a preconceived notion of what they think this is all saying and then you've got to start

massaging everything else to get it to match with that because otherwise you've got contradictions that are hard to deal with.

Well, as we can see here, like this idea of Job not being converted. How does a guy develop *hupomone* who doesn't have faith? How does get a guy who has faith get it without being converted? It doesn't make sense.

Well, there's another common argument that is oftentimes used to try to get the foundation of this book to agree with this idea and we're going to look at this. Now let's look in Job chapter 1. We're going to start reading in verse 8.

Job 1:8. Then 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, one who fears God and shuns evil?"

9) So Satan answered the Lord and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing?

10) "Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around 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 now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!" (NKJ)

Now I pointed this out earlier but I'm just going to revisit this to make sure that we're on the same track before we move forward here. But here we have God pointing out to Satan, "Have you noticed how righteous this man is?" Now think of the context of the challenge He's giving him. He's pointing out that "This is the most righteous man on the planet. Have you noticed how My superstar here?" Now, who's He talking to? He's talking to an individual we know as the accuser of the Brethren. And what's his response? He doesn't come back and make an accusation. There's a rather straightforward lesson in that.

But what we're going to look at is some of the arguments that are used to try to make this match with the idea that it's about self-righteousness. Because you see if you're thinking this is about, he's got this major sin of self-righteousness that has to be beat out of him, why didn't Satan point it out? Why didn't Satan say, "Well, God, don't you see the big blaring beam in his eye? Don't you see that self-righteousness problem?" He doesn't do that. Well, why is that? Because if you accept this for what it says, there's kind of an obvious lesson., but look at the arguments that are oftentimes used to try to make this match with, again, the idea that this is all about self-righteousness.

There are two common arguments that I've heard most of my life that are used, in my opinion, to kind of massage these Scriptures. And they go like this. The most common argument I've heard is this, it says:

Well, you have to understand that self-righteousness is this unique sin. And if a person has self-righteousness, well, that blinds them from being able to see it in someone else. And, of course, Satan being the poster-child for self-righteousness, he has so much of

it; he's not able to see that self-righteousness in Job. So, therefore, he couldn't point it out.

That's the most common argument I've heard all my life.

I've actually even heard, you might say, a stronger version of this argument also taught in the Church of God. And it goes like this. It says:

Well, see because Satan is such a—he's the poster-child for sin in general because he's the epitome of sin. He's just so racked with sin. Because of that, he's, therefore, blinded from the ability to see sin in other people. So he can't see sin in others and that prevents him from being able to point it out or him being able to make an accusation like that.

Well, let's examine both of these from the Bible and see if they have any validity.

Now, as I mentioned before, Satan is referred to as the accuser of the Brethren. Let's turn over to a familiar Scripture. I think we all know where we're going here. It's Revelation chapter 12. Revelation chapter 12, we're going to look at a section of Scripture where Satan is referred to as the accuser of the Brethren. Revelation chapter 12, we're going to start reading in verse 9.

Revelation 12:9. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

10) Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. (NKJ)

Now notice here Satan is referred to as the title of "the accuser of the brethren." He is the accuser of the Brethren who accused them before God's throne.

Now, let's look at the word *accused* here because the meaning of this is going to really answer this whole question for us. The word here translated as *accused* is a Greek word *kategoreo*. It's *k-a-t-e-g-o-r-e-o*. It's Strong's number 2723. And according to The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament by Spiro Zodhiates, it is defined as "to openly speak against, to condemn or accuse, mainly in a legal sense."

Now think about that. If you accuse someone in a legal sense, you're accusing them of violating a law. Now, let's look at the context of where this took place. He is standing before God's throne accusing God's people. Obviously, the law in question is God's Law. And you don't have to turn there—I think we're all familiar with it—but 1 John 3 verse 4 tells us that violations of God Law is defined as sin. So what we have is Satan standing before God's throne accusing God's people of sinning. How could he ever do that if he can't see sin? So, obviously, there's no validity to this idea that Satan can't see sin.

Now let's also look at the idea that self-righteousness is this unique sin that if an individual has that they can't see it in other people. Well, you don't have to turn there for time's sake, but Romans chapter 2 tells us that we can learn lessons about the spirit world by making observations of the physical world. One of the specific examples it gives us is we can learn about the Godhead or we can learn about the God Family by looking at the physical family. But it's illustrating the point that there are lessons that we can learn by making observations at the physical world that will teach us things about the spiritual world.

Let's utilize this particular principle here. Now when a person becomes more converted and starts acting more godly and converted in their lives, we refer to them as acting more Christ-like. In other words, we're seeing more and more of Christ's character in that person's behavior and how they act. Now we're all familiar with that.

And the opposite is also true. As a person becomes more and more sinful and more and more carnal and goes more the way of sin, they're exhibiting more and more of Satan's behavior. They're acting more like him and exhibiting more of his character.

So based upon all this principle, let's take a look at what the Bible tells us about self-righteous people and how that sin plays out in their lives, and see what that teaches us about how it will play out in Satan's life. Turn with me over to Luke chapter 18. Luke chapter 18, we're going to start reading in verse 9. We're going to read a parable here that's teaching us about self-righteous people and how that sin plays out in a person's life. It says:

Luke 18:9. Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, (NKJ)

In other words, He spoke this parable to teach us about self-righteous people and how that sin plays out in a person's life. And notice what comes with it:

Luke 18:9b. and despised others: (NKJ)

In other words, these two tend to come-hand-in-hand. And how does that exhibit itself? Let's keep reading in verse 10.

Luke 18:10. "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

11) "The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector.

12) 'I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' (NKJ)

Now here we have the Bible giving us the real poster-child for self-righteousness, which is the Pharisees. Now did having self-righteousness make them less likely to point out the sins of others or be able to see the sins of others? No. It made them more likely to point out the sins of others. In fact, if we observe people that we typically think of as

self-righteous, isn't one of the traits they normally have is that they're the first to point out the sins of everyone else and that's one of the reasons we call them self-righteous. Isn't how that normally plays out?

Well, think of this also, the idea was brought up: Well, what about the sins they particularly have themselves. Can they see that in others? Well, let's look over in Luke chapter 12 and see something else that Christ talks about Pharisees, our poster-children for self-righteousness here. Luke chapter 12 and verse 1, it says:

Luke 12:1. In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first *of all*, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. (NKJ)

In other words, the same individuals, who were pointed out for how self-righteous they are, are known for hypocrisy. Now what is hypocrisy? It's typically representing yourself one way, living the other. Don't we also oftentimes call someone a hypocrite who criticizes other people for doing the exact same things they do themselves? Isn't that one of the biggest reasons we tend to label someone a hypocrite?

So here we have the individuals known for self-righteousness. And what are they also known for? Pointing out in others the very sins they have themselves.

So does it make any sense to say that, "Well, self-righteousness blinds someone from being able to see the sins in others they have themselves"? Not according to the Bible it doesn't. And if that's how it plays out in sinful people, it makes great sense that's how it plays out with Satan as well.

So what we're left with is a very obvious lesson. We have the very accuser of the Brethren challenged on Job's righteousness and he does not make an accusation. It's because there wasn't a major accusation to make.

The point that he made was "God, You need to let me go after him. You need to let me go after him with everything I've got. Then we'll see him mess up." That was his response. It tells us a great deal of what this was really about.

I'm going to get a little bit ahead of myself and I can't totally develop what I'm going to say here in conclusion until next time. This is not a book about a man with self-righteousness having that beat out of him. This is a man that was coming to totally understand a very graduate level lesson at a very high level.

And the lesson of this book is:

The Providence of God.

It is God's right as the Creator, as the Master Potter, to do with us and to mold and shape us and to put us through what He deems appropriate and deems necessary to

produce us as He wants in His Kingdom ultimately and to put us through circumstances that may be grueling, that may be very painful and difficult for us to deal with, and, in fact, that we should trust Him and follow Him in that and not question His judgment. That's the real lesson of this book.

That's why He chose a man who was so righteous to do this. If He had chosen a man who was already falling out in big sins and brought all this upon him, it would confuse the entire subject. He chose him for his righteousness to illustrate this point because he hadn't done anything major wrong.

And again, we'll look at later the context of his whole comments, but the self-righteousness that we're aware of in Job's comments, that's again a response to the trial. But to even understand that clearly, we have to look at the context in which he made those comments and made those mistakes to have an accurate picture. Because again, this is not a book about this man's sins, this is a book about *The Providence of God* and a man having to come to understand that on a very graduate level. And he was chosen for this so this book could be written to teach all of us these lessons.

But see if we look at this book with reverse interpretation and we look at the difficult sections and then turn around and try to interpret the straightforward ones to match that, what happens is we not only come up with some very askew ideas, we miss the whole point of what the book is trying to say to us. We miss the major lessons that were intended in putting the book together.

We're about out of time today. But like I mentioned when we started off, this is going to be a two-part series because again there wasn't enough time to cover all of this.

What we're going to look at next time is two major things. We're going to look at a context in which to understand Job's trials because oftentimes when we look at his self-righteous comments—the blasting he did of God, the questioning of God's judgments—it's oftentimes extracted and it's batted around, you might say, in an intellectual, philosophical means and looked at in the context as if it happened in our everyday trials. And that's nowhere close to accurate! We have to look at it in the intense situation it was going through to have an accurate perspective to correctly view his comments. Because, yes, they are self-righteous, but again, we have to look at them in context. We're going to look at that—a proper context to view his trials.

Then we're also going to look at this greater lesson on *The Providence of God* because this is really what this story is about.

So we're about out of time today. So I'm going to conclude and just say: Tune in next time for *A Fresh Look at the Book of Job, Part 2*.