

Jeffery Gurley

Nyack College

Reading of the Old Testament OT503

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Reflection Paper

Opening Statement

Chapter twenty-one from Hill and Walton's book "A survey of the Old Testament", analyzes the book of Job from the bible. There are three key ideas/main points in the text. The first being "it is not true that only the wicked suffer". The second one being "God's justice can not be reduced to a simple formula like the retribution principle." Lastly, the third one being "God's infinite wisdom is the key to acknowledging his justice". These key ideas/main points are analyzed and explained as to how they fit into the overall shape of the Old Testament. Chapter 21 has three major themes. The first theme is the retribution principle. The second theme is the Wisdom, Justice and Sovereignty of God. The third theme is being a mediator. The retribution principle will be analyzed and discussed on how it is developed in the New Testament. Also, some other practical themes in the book of Job will be discussed and analyzed.

Major Points

The first major point of the book is "it is not true that only the wicked suffer". This statement is heavily analyzed in the book of Job in the bible. Chapter 21 of the textbook states "the purpose of the book of Job is to explore God's policies regarding justice, especially as it regards to the suffering of the righteous. This investigation takes two major directions. First, the satan applies in 1:9-11 that God's policies of blessing the righteous is counter-productive to the development of true righteousness.

Blessings induces people to be righteous for what they stand to gain from it. He suggests that his claim can be demonstrated by cutting off Job's blessings. The satan's contention is that righteousness purely for righteousness sake does not exist and indeed cannot exist in the system that God operates. God's policies are placed on trial here, not Job. " It pains me to admit that there is a lot of truth in satan argument. There are several followers of God that believe God is like a big Santa-Clause and because they've been good boys and girls, there will be presents under the tree. This is far from the truth. You should be righteous not because you want to gain items such as houses, cars, and money, but you should be righteous because it is ethical, moral, and the right way to live. Chapter 21 then goes on to state " Job wonders how God can possibly allow the righteous person to suffer. Again it is God's policies that's on trial. " We as humans cannot question how God operates. We cannot question what God allows and what God doesn't allow. We need to continue to have faith that God has everything under control. The Second major point of Chapter 21 is that God's justice cannot be reduced to a simple formula like the retribution principle. The retribution principle is simply defined as a theory that the righteous will prosper and the wicked will suffer. In regards to the retribution principle, the reading states " the principle can not be used, however, to demand action from God or to figure out what a person is really like.". The third major point of the chapter is God's infinite wisdom is the key to acknowledging his justice. This is a statement to the followers of God to maintain their faith at all times. No matter they are going through. God's infinite wisdom will have things work out for you. A statement from the reading says "The resolution offered by the speeches of God's is that his justice must be deduced from his wisdom. Causes of suffering can not be consistently or accurately deduced and no one has sufficient wisdom to call God's wisdom into question ".

How do these points fit in the over all shape of the OLD Testament ?

These points are some of the biggest issues in the Old Testament. You see these issues are brought up several times throughout the Old Testament. Here are a couple examples. The first example being " it is not true that only the wicked suffer. " This is a very true statement when reading the Old Testament. It indicates that righteous (good people) suffer as well as the wicked. We see this in the story of Joseph, who was sold into slavery by his brothers (Genesis 37:26-28) and he was falsely accused of rape (Genesis 39:11-20) which led to him being thrown in jail. We also see this in the story of Daniel who was thrown in the lions den (Daniel 6 : 10-16) because he prayed to God. These are two examples of righteous people in the bible who suffered.

God's justice can not be reduced to a simple formula like the retribution principle. If God operated in this manner ,everyone must be good at all times or else you would be punished. However, this theory does not take into account that humans are not perfect people. Humans are going to make mistakes, bad decisions and sometimes even sin. God knows this and has used imperfect people throughout the Old Testament to show people the goodness of God. These people include Solomon, David, Jacob, and you can make an argument for Nebuchadnezzar (after he gave God glory, his sanity was restored and he returned him to the glory of his kingdom Daniel 4:34-37). I believe God used imperfect people to send a message that he can bless anyone whether it's the righteous or the wicked. However, you must repent of your sins and give God glory. God provides a very clear message that there is no law, more important than honoring, worshiping, praising, and giving God glory.

God's infinite wisdom is the key to acknowledging his Justice. We see this in the Old Testament in regards to Moses and the people of Israel. In Exodus 14:1-4, the lord told Moses to tell the Israelites to encamp between Migdol and the sea. As Pharaoh and the Egyptians were marching after them, the Israelites questioned what the lord told Moses and asked Moses why he brought them here to die. They

even requested that Moses leave them alone. As scripture goes on to tell us, the lord instructs Moses to part the sea and allow the Israelites to cross the sea on dry land. When Pharaoh and his army went to chase them, the lord ordered the sea to close, destroying them all. So God saved the righteous and punished the unjust. God has all the knowledge and does not have to tell us as humans all of his knowledge or all of his plans. We as humans have to follow the instructions God gives to us and everything will work out in the end for us. Some other examples in the Old Testament include Noah and the Ark (Genesis 6) and Joshua and the Israelites (Joshua 1).

How is the retribution principle developed in the New Testament ?

The retribution principle is greatly developed in the New Testament. The best example of how God can not be simply placed or explained by the retribution principle is the story of Jesus. Jesus is a righteous man, a man without sin, and the Son of God. However he suffered on the cross to the extent to where he questioned God. (Matthew 27:46 " my God my God why hast thou forsaken me ".) However God who has all power and knowledge knew that Jesus had to die on the cross for humankind. God knew of his plans and knew that this plan had to be executed in this way to save the people from sin. This is an example of how God will allow righteous people to suffer in the New Testament. We just have to remember to be faithful to God and have faith in him. A quote from the textbook states " we often can not know what causes our suffering, but we can take comfort that all is in the hand of infinitely wise and sovereign God. "

Another example of how God cannot be simply placed or explained by the retribution principle is the story of Paul. Paul (unlike Jesus) is not a righteous man. Paul who formerly was called Saul, while talking about his past life in Acts 22:4, he killed Christians and placed them in jail. Acts 22:4 states " I persecuted the followers of this way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison." This happened before he had an encounter with Jesus (Acts 22:6-10). Based on the retribution principle, Paul was wicked and should have suffered. However, the Lord allowed Paul to prosper by using him to become one of the most influential Christians in the history of the bible. A quote from an article titled "Who Was the Apostle Paul ? " states " Paul started more than a dozen churches and he's traditionally considered the author of thirteen books of the bible. More than any other biblical writer. For this reason, Saint Paul is often considered one of the most influential people in history.". This is more evidence that God cannot be simply placed or explained by the retribution principle. God can

bless anyone he chooses. He has blessed people who have a history of being righteous and he has blessed people who have a history of being wicked.

What are some of the practical themes of this book?

In regards to the book of Job there are several practical themes. Some of these themes are living a righteous life will make God proud, take your issues in life to God and you will face challenges as a follower of God. Living a righteous life makes God proud. Job was an outstanding man who lived a righteous life on earth and God noticed him. God was very proud of Job. When the devil came with a challenge to God (Job 1: 10-12), God had so much faith in Job's character that he offered Job to Satan as a representative of mankind. This was a great honor. God is not going to choose anybody that he does not have his total trust and faith in to complete this challenge. This is an example of what every person alive should strive to be: to get to a level of righteousness that God is very pleased with you and wants to show you off to the world as an example of how mankind is supposed to live their life.

You should take your issues in life with God. While Job was suffering at the hands of satan, he went through many emotions. In chapter 10:3-8, Job finally took his complaints straight to God. Then God answered Job's complaints in chapters 38-41. In chapter 42:12-17, God then blessed Job. If you take your issues to God he will answer you. The way we have been taught to communicate with God is through prayer. If you have a consistent prayer life, this will strengthen your relationship with God. Prayer is a powerful tool that we can use to take our issues in life directly with God. You will face many challenges as a follower of God. (ex. Becoming a Christian). Unlike what some people may believe, your life is not going to be all peaches and cream. You will face many challenges on a consistent basis that will test your faith in God and how righteous of a person you are. As we seen in scripture, some of these challenges will come directly from satan (Job 1:7-12, revelations 12:10). The way you live your life on a daily basis is an on going test on how faithful you are to God and how righteous your character is. There

is a lot of temptations out there in the world and no one said that being a follower of God will be easy, but all the sin in the world is not worth sacrificing your happiness with the lord.

Psalms 23:6 states " surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has some very interesting unanswered questions. How can God let a righteous man like Job suffer at the hands of satan? Due to the fact Job complained to God, did Job pass the challenge between God and satan? If you are a Christian or follower of God, should you have the knowledge of God's plans so you can properly carry them out? These are very intriguing questions that I have no answer for. I do however know that you have to trust and follow God because he will lead you down the right path.

Reference Page

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