

## [The Flawed Theology of Job](#)

Posted on [April 9, 2014](#) by [Dan Haley](#)

I have been reading a book by Greg Boyd, *Is God To Blame?* I have enjoyed most of it thus far with a few exceptions which are not reason to close it; actually, I always try to get through books even when I may disagree with parts not how great. It is an accomplishment, as in another book done, and more important, there may be something to learn. It may be that I learn something new or learn how to better defend against something I disagree with in an efficient manner.

So far I have thoroughly enjoyed Boyd's offerings and have been blessed in studying alongside his writing. The 4th chapter of *Is God To Blame?*, Complexity and War, was excellent. Boyd touched on the subject of Job in another book, *Repenting of Religion*. Job may have authored the very theology that the majority of christianity shares today, namely that the Lord gives and the Lord taketh away. A popular song I always sing along with says:

...Every blessing You pour out  
I'll turn back to praise  
*When the darkness closes in, Lord*  
*Still I'm gonna say...*

*You give and take away*  
*You give and take away*  
My heart will choose to say  
Lord, Blessed be Your name...

Read more: [Tree63 – Blessed Be Your Name Lyrics | MetroLyrics](#)

There are certainly many other Christian songs that allude to such belief. How many times have I heard testimonies of people wondering why the Lord took someone home, or why someone needed to suffer with a disease or an accident? The answer is at first unfathomable but slowly they come around to "God must be trying to teach me something" or some such statement.

### **Job 4:7-9 NRSV**

- (7) "Think now, who that was innocent ever perished? Or where were the upright cut off?"
- (8) As I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same.
- (9) By the breath of God they perish, and by the blast of his anger they are consumed.

Eliphaz makes the above assertion in answer to Job's questioning. It should be easy to refute this claim by Job's friend. Millions of innocents have died and many who sow trouble live to a ripe old age. As Boyd states, "*Eliphaz's statements illustrate the remarkable capacity some people have to ignore reality for the sake of preserving a formulaic theology*". Eliphaz continues.

### **Job 5:17-18 NRSV**

(17) "How happy is the one whom God reprove; therefore do not despise the discipline of the Almighty.

(18) For he wounds, but he binds up; he strikes, but his hands heal.

Job should be happy! After all, God is behind Job's suffering and his family's death. Does this sound familiar? A tornado rips through someone's house and they are initially filled with sorrow but they eventually decide it was God's will; God must want them to move or have some other plan in store for them. They pray and pray, the insurance comes through and they build a bigger house, a blessing from God! Why can we not just see this as the course of nature? When the sinner next door loses their house it is divine intervention to bring them closer to God or maybe they are being punished. When the sinner's insurance comes through and they build a better house yet remain unbelievers, what is the reason?

Boyd continues describing how Job's friends assert that if Job gets right with God that God would return all that Job lost through blessings of another family and even greater wealth than before. " *Promising a father who just lost all of his children that if he will only get right with God his tent will be safe, his children will not be missing and his offspring will be like the grass of the earth is not just hollow, it's positively cruel.*"

The chapter continues with a brief look at cultural and deity beliefs of Job's time. Most cultures believed these things to be true. The god's were in control and did as they saw fit to control their followers. The suffering or grief caused was of no consequence to them, they knew what was best. The believer needed to accept and search for the reason, learn and move on without question. This was what Job could not do. Job questioned and accused God of ways completely out of God's character.

### **Job 9:23-24 NRSV**

(23) When disaster brings sudden death, he mocks at the calamity of the innocent.

(24) The earth is given into the hand of the wicked; he covers the eyes of its judges—if it is not he, who then is it?

Job declares that God laughs at the calamity of the innocent! That is pretty bold! When wickedness occurs God covers the eyes of the judges so no one knows the reasons and the wicked go free. Job asks, if not God, then who allows such sorrow?

### **Job 24:12 NRSV**

(12) From the city the dying groan, and the throat of the wounded cries for help; yet God pays no attention to their prayer.

Is this how we see God today? There is an infinite amount of injustice around the world, do we ascribe it to the hands of a God who IS LOVE? When people are starving, suffering, being beaten and tortured, whole societies being killed... God turns a blind eye.

Boyd says that Job's description of God is even more harsh when it comes to himself. Job 10:8 says that God made Job and then turned to destroy him.

**Job 16:7-8 NRSV**

(7) Surely now God has worn me out; he has made desolate all my company.

(8) And he has shriveled me up, which is a witness against me; my leanness has risen up against me, and it testifies to my face.

Job now calls God his *adversary*. This is the ultimate failure of Job's theology. God is his adversary. Job insists earlier that he has done no wrong, committed no sin, that he was righteous, yet God has turned against him. Job's friends accuse him of wrongdoing; their theology was just as bad.

God finally answers Job and his friends. The answer seems to have totally gone over the heads of modern day believers. It has also kept many unbelievers away from God. Where is the cry and message of God's great love, that God does not cause calamity, that nature's power is awesome and sometimes unforgiving, and that God does not turn away after he harms people? That message is given at times but as soon as some disaster befalls an individual we try to seek the divine reason behind it. Christians are wishy-washy on this topic. Even after 9-11 well known preachers cried out for repentance! God is punishing us for our immorality!

**Job 38:2 NRSV**

(2) "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?"

God asks who are you Job? Who do you think you are? Stand up like a man and answer me! God goes on to tell Job that Job has no idea who God is. Job has no idea of the complexity of creation.

**Job 38:5-7 NRSV**

(5) Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it?

(6) On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone

(7) when the morning stars sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy?

**Job 38:18 NRSV**

(18) Have you comprehended the expanse of the earth? Declare, if you know all this.

**Job 38:33 NRSV**

(33) Do you know the ordinances of the heavens? Can you establish their rule on the earth?

We must move beyond the original creation in God's statements. This is about the vastness and complexity of the entire universe which we think we have so much knowledge. God is trying to convey that we cannot possibly comprehend the reasons things happen. God is not causing calamity and death arbitrarily! When we see Jesus and his actions during his ministry on earth we see God! Jesus did not laugh in the face of the lepers, the blind, the parents who had deathly ill children; Jesus sought to bring peace and healing. One day the entire creation will be brought to God by His Son, and then all will be well.

Finally, Boyd discusses the Chaos Theory. This theory puts forth that the smallest actions can cause massive happenings and man cannot possibly account for each step let alone the initial cause. Rocks hurl through space and we have little idea where they came from or how much damage they have caused

before they might crash into earth. Space is so vast and the majority of it is beyond our reach and even past our possible knowledge. Every action of every being has a lasting effect on everything around it no matter how great or small. God is not involved in every single action; creation is groaning, it awaits the revelation of the sons of God. Until that time it is chaos. This is the message God is giving Job.

Job never knows the real reason for his suffering. He is blessed because he still trusted God even though he experienced such evil in his life. The chapter has much more to offer; I recommend a good reading and study when you get the chance!

As I read I was reminded of the flawed theology of believers, one that I finally came to grips with after studying the openness of God. Many in the salvation of all circles hold to a belief that God controls each and every thing in one's life, including when they will finally believe. Many others teach that the death of a loved one may be brought about by God to bring others to salvation. Many Christians simply give up on God after their preacher tells them all is of God and they must wait for the revelation and will of God in their lives after a horrible tragedy, a revelation that never comes. I once heard of a testimony of a woman who finally saw salvation through the death of her teenage daughter in a car accident, no mention was made that her daughter was probably burning in hell so she, the mother, could spend her afterlife in heaven. It is a wonder that anyone follows God if this is how they truly think of him.

Many scholars believe that Job was the first book ever written among the biblical canon. If so, God desired to put to rest very early on that he was NOT the cause of everything a human would experience. I have also read numerous articles about the validity of the belief that Job was a real, living individual but that he was rather a character in a poetic drama written by an author to teach us something important about the Creator. I need to research this more thoroughly but initially I must admit that this is very plausible as I still have difficulty understanding God allowing Satan to kill Job's children and all of his hired household, to take away Job's entire life while causing him incredible physical pain. God tested Abraham in the sacrifice of Isaac, yet God did not actually require Isaac's death. God provided a sacrifice. Job trusted God, he worshipped God, and he even went so far as to make sure his children were covered for their iniquities. God said that Job was his servant, chosen for the challenge because God knew Job would not forsake him. Another topic for another time!

God has a plan to bring all to himself. He is LOVE. God is not laughing at those who suffer. God is not causing earthquakes and tsunamis. God is working to right the wrong begun by others, spiritual and fleshly, to his creation. We can carry this message to others, or we can follow the theology that the book of Job seeks to refute.