

## Job & Coronavirus: The Inscrutable Sovereignty of God

*Inscrutable = mysterious, enigmatic, inexplicable, incomprehensible.*

Inscrutable comes from a Latin word “to search.”

Job 9:10: *God does great things beyond searching out and marvelous things beyond number.* The ways of God cannot be scrutinized because of our human limitations. Great and marvelous refers to deeds of creation, redemption, or judgment.

How is the sovereignty of God demonstrated in Job and with the current Coronavirus panic?

First, God initiates and controls the testing of Job's faith.

Second, God makes the rules regarding sin and suffering.

Third, God is the creator and controller of all things.

First, God initiates and controls the testing of Job's faith. Read **Job 1-2**. Satan is not in control of the test. Satan must have God's permission to take away Job's wealth, health, and children (1:1-5).

- First test (1:6-22): Job lost all his oxen and donkeys (stolen by Sabeans), sheep (killed by fire of God), camels (stolen by Chaldeans), all servants killed, and then sons and daughters killed by a tornado. Your children are your greatest wealth! He did not lose his wife and she became part of the test.
- 1:22: *In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.*
- Second test (2:1-8): I think Satan's assessment of human nature is accurate (2:4). God permitted Satan to take Job's health. God didn't directly take Job's health; he permitted Satan to strike Job with itchy and painful sores, but not to take his life.
- Third test (2:9-10): Job's third test was his bitter and angry wife. When Job needed his wife the most, she turned against him. “Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!” She gave no encouragement, but became his most vile accuser. But she must have repented in the end because he had more sons and daughters unless he got a new wife.
- Fourth test (2:11-13; 4-37): Job's friends made false accusations and pressured him to repent of sins he was not guilty of. Their accusations were based on the faulty assumption that Job was unrighteous and God immediately punished him.
- Due to **Coronavirus** you lose your job and business and then your children get the virus and die and then you get it. Your spouse is asymptomatic and has no empathy for you. While you're suffering in the hospital ICU three church friends come to visit. They silently share your suffering for seven days. Then they cross-examine your motives ‘fishing’ for sin and accuse and condemn you with the wrong application of Bible verses.

I am interested in origins - the origin of the universe and life being the most important. (Was it Genesis 1:1 or a Big Bang and a long evolutionary process?)

Coronavirus origin? It's important to know the origin to prevent it from happening again. The virus has a natural and supernatural origin. 3 possibilities: (1) God decreed it - Psalm 91:8; (2) Satan did it - but Satan is God's dog on a leash (Satan needs God's permission to inflict a righteous person.); (3) human error - we have free will (There's evidence it accidentally escaped a P4 lab in Wuhan but the CCP is blocking access to its origin.) God is sovereign over human error without being directly responsible for it. (The evil plot of Joseph's brothers and Pharaoh's decree to kill Hebrew babies to get Moses into Pharaoh's household are examples.)

If God is directly or indirectly responsible then what is His purpose? That is God's inscrutable sovereignty. God is doing something geopolitically, ecclesiastically (reviving churches), and personally in every believer.

Coronavirus is a test of our faith. Do you trust God and His word, Psalm 23 & 91, or live in fear? Knowing the truth will set you free from fear. The truth will not just set you free, it will KEEP you free. We have made the cure worse than the disease. It is less deadly than the annual influenza. (How many have died from the annual flu?) It's being politicized. The death numbers are manipulated to be less (China 4,500+) or more than they really are (USA 75,000+). (*Read the article from Memphis Morning News by a group of Alabama MDs.*) I don't agree with the Louisiana Pastor who defied the government and continued church services. But the thin line that separates us from Communist totalitarian rule is our Constitution and Bill of Rights. A crisis is an excuse for power and control-hungry leaders to infringe on our rights and not restore them.

MP: God initiated the test and then directed it to the conclusion he had appointed. Whenever God allows us to be tested (Coronavirus) he is in control and we must trust his grace, goodness, and justice.

Second, God makes the rules regarding sin and suffering. Just as God created the laws of physics and can overrule them and do miracles, so God created the moral laws that govern the world and they are not greater than him; he can overrule them and he can delay deserved consequences. There is ultimate and final cause and effect, a final judgment by God. But an immediate cause and effect relationship between sin and suffering judgment isn't true in every situation, because God is patient and kind.

Read **Luke 13:1-5**. Jesus Christ was asked about Galileans murdered by Pilate and a tower that fell and killed 18 people. Some people said, "They were worse sinners and got what they deserved." Jesus responded, "They were not worse sinners and if you don't REPENT you will get what you deserve; you will perish eternally."

Coronavirus version of 13:1-3: There were some present at that very time who told Jesus about the 270,000+ people who died from the Coronavirus. And he answered them, “Do you think that those people were worse sinners than all the other people who got infected and survived it, because they suffered and died in this way? <sup>3</sup>No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”

**2 Peter 3:8-10:** *But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.* If there was immediate cause and effect relationship between sin and suffering and death, then we would all be dead.

America has three national sins that deserve judgment and suffering. One is past history, two remain, and the list will probably grow depending on who is President and what churches do.

**First, slavery:** Abraham Lincoln knew it was a national sin and the Civil War was God’s judgment. In Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address, he referred to the war as God’s judgment on the nation (not just the South) for indulging slavery. *“Fondly do we hope—fervently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue, until all the wealth piled by the bond-man’s two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash, shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said ‘the judgments of the Lord, are true and righteous altogether.’”*

- Why did Lincoln say 250 years? Slavery began in America in 1619 when slaves were brought to Jamestown VA to work tobacco fields.
- What scripture was said 3000 years ago? Lincoln quoted Psalm 19:9.
- This national sin was paid for by the Civil War (620K dead, 2% of population) and new amendments were added to the Constitution.

The other two national sins:

- Abortion: 1973 SCOTUS legalized the murder of babies (62 million/950 a day).
- Sodomy: 2015 SCOTUS legalized sodomy-based (same-sex) marriage (SSM). This includes the persecution of those who refuse to acknowledge or participate in it and the denial of their First Amendment rights (Establishment & Free Exercise clauses). A democrat presidential candidate said if churches do not support SSM

they should lose their tax exempt status! SSM includes the corruption of children which is very offensive to Jesus Christ.

We have not repented for two of these national sins, but God initiates no immediate connection between sin and suffering judgment. God didn't kill the 5 liberal SCOTUS judges. (Two of the female judges on the court had already performed same-sex marriages.) God didn't rain down fire on them. God is patient and kind and waits for repentance. (The irony is God waits for something only he can grant - repentance.) **God's judgment moves slowly like a lava flow, not quickly like a flash flood. But it will come like a tsunami.** (Maybe it's already here.) It will burn. Our God is a consuming fire!

Before Jesus Christ destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah he demonstrated patience and justice.

- Christ sent angels to see if their sin was really as bad as he heard. Genesis 18:20-21: *Then the LORD said to Abraham, "The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very serious. I want to go down to see if they deserve destruction as implied by the outcry which has come to me about it, and if not, I want to know."* Outcry refers to the prayers of righteous people and/or the protests of victims of crime.
- Christ allowed Abraham to intercede for the sinful cities (but he was really interceding for Lot's family, not the Sodomites). Genesis 18:21-26: *And the LORD said to Abraham, "If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will spare the whole place for their sake."*
- Questions: Will God spare America for the sake of true Christians? Or will he take us out like Lot's family and then let judgment fall?

Personal: Your suffering doesn't necessarily mean you have sinned. And yet, all suffering is a result of living in a world under the curse of sin. Your suffering may be a lost job, bankruptcy, disease, cancer, death of a child, or damage to your body from an accident. Your suffering isn't tied to some specific sin. You don't need to pray, "How have I sinned so that You allowed this to happen to me?" because you are a sinner saved by grace.

There is a real link between sin and suffering, but the three friends make the wrong application to Job's situation. God created the link between sin and suffering for our repentance, but He is also sovereign over it and he can slow it down or speed it up; he can delay indefinitely or he can strike like lightning.

God's sovereignty is inscrutable. That's a comfort for those who believe, but terrifying for those who disbelieve.

Third, God is the creator and controller of all things. The most common description of God is "the Almighty" (30). Job 42:2: "I know you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted."

Elihu speaks 32-37. Elihu demonstrates wisdom because he waits until the other three have finished before he speaks and no sacrifice is required for his counsel, so it isn't sinful (42:7-9), but it isn't a complete understanding of God's ways.

Elihu's speech exalts God's almightiness. Read 36:22-26; 37:23-24. Job 36:22-23, 26 *"Behold, God is exalted in his power; who is a teacher like him? Who has prescribed for him his way, or who can say, 'You have done wrong'? Behold, God is great, and we know him not; the number of his years is unsearchable (inscrutable). 37:23-24: The Almighty—we cannot find him; he is great in power; justice and abundant righteousness he will not violate. Therefore men fear him; he does not regard any who are wise in their own conceit."*

God's almightiness is demonstrated by His control over all creation: Job 38-39. Read 40:15-24; 41:1-2, 15-21. Behemoth and leviathan are not a hippo and a croc. (Many Bibles have a footnote for 40:15 and 41:1 referring to large animals we know today. But the animals referred to are extinct dinosaurs like the Titanosaurus and a fire-breathing sea serpent.) I saw three moose in the Colorado Rockies. They're big, but not big enough to be the animals God chose to demonstrate His almightiness. Titanosaurs were around 80 tons, 140 ft long, 70 ft tall. God picked the mightiest animals on earth to demonstrate His power. God's message is basically "I am the Almighty Creator. My ways are inscrutable but always just and righteous."

**God called Job a blameless and righteous man (1:8), but he still repents: 42:1-6.** Job now knows that no purpose of God can be thwarted by sinful human beings. Job knows God in a new way. His knowledge became real experience - from hearing about to seeing - like the difference between an audio and video call or reading about someone and meeting him/her in person.

Satan's challenge: Job 1:9-11: Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for no reason? Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face."

Job 2:4: And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil? He still holds fast his integrity, although you incited me against him to destroy him without reason." Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life. But stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face."

The essence of the contest is - IF God takes away all our material blessings THEN will we curse God and become atheists?

But the truth is **God is enough!** The truth God was seeking to demonstrate by Job's test was that God is His own reward. Satan's charge against Job was ultimately a charge against God himself, a charge that God is not sufficient in himself to satisfy every human desire and need; that God is not beautiful or worthy enough in himself to satisfy his people, so he gives people wealth and health to buy their love and loyalty to Him.

It's like you have a friend who is a friend as long as you pay for everything, but when you stop paying the friend leaves. Was that person your friend because he/she really valued you as a person or because you paid for everything and let him/her have his/her way all the time?

Job's perseverance when he lost everything and had only his relationship with God, proved that God was sufficient as Job's reward, that the Lord and his kingdom alone were worthy and glorious enough to satisfy Job's deepest desires, to satisfy him body and soul.

We can lose everything, but if we have God we have everything.

After Job knew "God is enough" then the LORD restored everything he lost and more. Read **42:10-17**.

If God took everything away from me then I would question and struggle like Job, but I would still follow Jesus Christ. (I hope He doesn't!) What about you? IF God took everything away from you, THEN would you know He is enough? I think God rarely does this to His children because Satan doesn't challenge their love and loyalty to the LORD. But if God took *one* thing from you that you think you cannot live without then would you know He is enough? At some point or in some incident everyone will be tested like Job to know God is enough. The incident will be the impetus to say with Job "I had heard about you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you." A 'therefore' may also be necessary; "therefore, I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

Our relationship with God is the most important thing in our lives; the one thing we cannot lose.