

**“Mortals, born of woman, are of few days and full of trouble.” (Job 14:1)**

I guess that many of us can sympathise with Job!

This is a list of many of the bad things that happen to human beings. You could tick off the trouble and suffering which you have experienced!

Many of the people we meet day by day have experienced trouble and suffering in their lives. We are not always aware of what people have been through.

Many people struggle with the idea of a God because they cannot understand how there can be so much suffering in the world if a good God is watching over it. For some people it is the reason why they have never believed in God, for others it is the reason why they stopped believing in God.

There are no quick and easy answers to this problem and it is easy for our words to seem hollow and unhelpful. I hope that the various issues raised here will enable us to sensitively help people struggling in this area.

<p><b>Natural disasters</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> earthquake <input type="checkbox"/> volcano <input type="checkbox"/> floods <input type="checkbox"/> drought <input type="checkbox"/> famine <input type="checkbox"/> storms <input type="checkbox"/> hurricanes <input type="checkbox"/> pests <input type="checkbox"/> fire <input type="checkbox"/> epidemics	<p><b>Violence</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> war <input type="checkbox"/> civil unrest <input type="checkbox"/> crime <input type="checkbox"/> robbery <input type="checkbox"/> injury <input type="checkbox"/> bullying <input type="checkbox"/> harassment <input type="checkbox"/> threats <input type="checkbox"/> abuse <input type="checkbox"/> rape	<input type="checkbox"/> addictions <input type="checkbox"/> losing things <input type="checkbox"/> arrest <input type="checkbox"/> trial <input type="checkbox"/> disgrace <input type="checkbox"/> shame	<input type="checkbox"/> death <input type="checkbox"/> bereavement <input type="checkbox"/> suicide
<p><b>Accidents</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> travel accidents <input type="checkbox"/> home accidents <input type="checkbox"/> injury <input type="checkbox"/> fire	<p><b>Personal troubles</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> loneliness <input type="checkbox"/> poverty <input type="checkbox"/> unemployment <input type="checkbox"/> drinking	<p><b>Health and death</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> illness <input type="checkbox"/> disease <input type="checkbox"/> injury <input type="checkbox"/> pain <input type="checkbox"/> mental illness <input type="checkbox"/> depression <input type="checkbox"/> breakdown <input type="checkbox"/> disability	<p><b>Relationships</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> loss of friends <input type="checkbox"/> arguments <input type="checkbox"/> disagreements <input type="checkbox"/> family breakdown <input type="checkbox"/> divorce <input type="checkbox"/> wrongly accused <input type="checkbox"/> misunderstood
			<p>Other: _____</p> <p>_____</p>

**The Fall**

God created mankind as the crown of his creation in his image and in his likeness. God had special relationship with human beings who were to be in charge of other living creatures and to care for the earth (Gen 1:26-30, 2:15).

There was only one commandment from God in the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:16-17). Adam and his wife disobeyed this commandment after being tempted by the serpent (Gen 3:1-7). The relationship with God was drastically damaged, For the woman there would be problems in childbearing and in marriage, for Adam the ground would be cursed and life would now be a struggle and there would be death (Gen 3:8-19). Adam and his wife, Eve, were banished from the Garden of Eden (Gen 3: 20-24).

The tendency to sin was passed down to all human beings from Adam and the whole human race became sinners and there would be death: Rom 5:12 Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned.

The sin of Adam also resulted in a curse of the very ground he walked on. Adam’s sin influenced the rest of creation: Rom 8:19 For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. 20 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

The image and likeness of God in mankind has been damaged by sin and the creation we live in has also been spoiled. These are major contributors to the problems of suffering and trouble in our imperfect world - unfortunately it is no longer good!

**Agents causing trouble**

- The earth, sea, atmosphere weather, Sun, astronomical sources (eg meteorites)
- Disease, bacteria, viruses
- Human beings - their relationships and their activities on the earth
- God
- Satan and demons

Person	Bible	Sin	Judgement
Adam and Eve	Gen 3	Disobedience	Cast out of Garden, difficulty in childbirth and marriage, ground cursed, hard life, death
Cain	Gen 4	Murder	Ground cursed, wanderer, mark
Mankind	Gen 6	Immorality, wickedness, evil thoughts, violence	The Flood
Ham (Canaan)	Gen 9:24	Immorality	Become a slave
Babel (Babylon)	Gen 11	Human pride, city, tower, false religion	Confusion of languages
Sodom Gom	Gen 18,19	Sin, immorality	Fire, sulphur, and salt
Egyptians	Ex 7-12	Hard-hearts, defying God	Plagues, death of first born
Israel	Ex-Deut	Hard-heart, stiff-necked, grumbling, reject authority, not trusting God	Judgements in the wilderness, 40 years wandering
Amorites etc	Gen 15:16	Social injustice, incest, adultery, fertility rites, homosexuals, bestiality, prostitution, idolatry, child sacrifice, witchcraft, mediums, occult Deut 7:1-6, 9:4-5, Lev 18-20	Destroyed and cast out of the land by Joshua etc.
Israel	Kings Chr	Idolatry, immorality, social injustice, ignoring God’s warnings, disobedience	Taken into Exile

**God’s Judgements**

Occasionally God inflicts trouble and suffering on individuals and groups of people because of their sin. He uses natural phenomena and other people to bring about his judgements.

**God is Good, Just and Righteous**

God is always perfectly righteous and incapable of wrong-doing or evil. He is the ultimate judge and lawmaker in the universe and determines what is right and wrong. He is the owner of the universe and every person since he is the creator.

We cannot expect to understand all of God’s purposes.

Isaiah 55:9 “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

Isaiah 64:8 Yet you, Lord, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.

## **Job - a case history**

The book of Job was given to us by God to enable us to understand some of the aspects of suffering.

Job was a blameless and righteous man who feared God. He had a large family, great wealth, many animals, a flawless reputation, he was kind and generous and well known.

One day everything went wrong: Bands of foreigners came and captured many of Job's animals and killed his servants. Fire came from heaven and burned up his sheep. A mighty storm destroyed the house where his sons and daughters were and all were killed. He had nothing left and said:

"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised."

A little later, Job was afflicted with terrible sores all over his body and was ill. His wife said he should curse God and die but he said:

"You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?"

Job ends up sitting among ashes scraping his body with broken pottery in a very sad state.

Job is visited by friends who try to help and advise him. Most of the book of Job is about his conversations and disagreements with these friends regarding his state..

At the end of the book, God reveals himself to Job who is greatly humbled. God vindicates Job and says that the friends did not speak the truth about God. Eventually life turned around for Job and he again becomes wealthy, healthy and has a new family. He lived to a ripe old age.



## **Does God ever punish individuals by illness? - Yes!**

There are several examples of this direct punishment by God in the Bible. In many cases there is healing on repentance:

- **Leprosy** - Miriam (Num 12:1-16), Gehazi (2 Kings 5:7), Uzziah (2 Chron 26:16-23)
- **Snake bites** - Israel (Num 21:4-9)
- **Withered hand** - Jeroboam (1 Kings 13:1-10)
- **Bowel disease** - Jehoram (2 Chron 21:18)
- **Madness** - Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4:28-37)
- **Death** - Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:5,10), Herod (Acts 12:23)
- **Weak and sick** - Corinthian church (1 Cor 11:29-30)

In most cases, it is very unlikely that people we meet will be being punished by God for their sins. It is wise, however, before we pray for the sick to ensure that they are repentant and that they are not actively engaged in any known sin (James 5:15-16). There is a connection between the forgiveness of sins and healing (Luke 5:22-23). "See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you." (John 5:14)

## **Can illness always be related to personal sin?...No!**

We must be beware of thinking that every illness is related to personal sin.

The story of righteous Job makes this very clear - there must be other factors at play.

## **The man born blind**

John 9:1 As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. 2 His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" 3 "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him."

The disciples were trying to blame the man or his parents for his lifelong blindness. Jesus made it very clear that none of these were responsible. There was another higher reason why this individual was blind - eventually he was healed.

## **Today's Job's Comforters**

Anything which suggests to the suffering person that it is their fault that they are not healed. Possible suggestions are:

- You must have sinned
- There must be sin in the family
- You need to find the root of this illness
- You need more faith
- You need to pray in particular way
- You need to quote these verses

## **Job and his friends**

### **Limited World View**

Job and his friends argued from a limited world view which only included God and Job. As a result, the blame for Job's problems must be with God or Job!

### **Job's friends (comforters!)**

Their argument was based on the premise that God blesses righteous people and curses wicked people. Some of their advice was:

- God looks after the righteous - you need to appeal to him.
- You must have done wrong to deserve this. Does God pervert justice?
- If you repent of your sins, then your trouble will go away.
- Beware of the fate of the wicked - they will be destroyed!
- God is teaching you things through your suffering.

### **Job**

Job's statements include the following sentiments.

- I wish I'd never been born!
- My life is shattered. I've lost my friends and my dignity.
- I've tried to serve God as best I can - I don't understand why I deserve all this.
- It is not that simple - sometimes wicked people prosper and live very well in this life. Is that just?
- God, why are you targetting me - what have I done wrong - please forgive me.
- Even if God slays me, I will hope in him.
- God - where have you gone?
- I know that my redeemer lives!

## **Does God bless the righteous and curse the wicked?**

The Bible has many statements regarding the rewards of the righteous and the opposite for the wicked eg Prov 3:33.

Read Lev 26 and Deut 28 to see the warnings of God to Israel and the dire consequences of disobedience:

**Blessings for obedience:** plenty, prosperity, food, wealth, military success, large family, honor, property, good crops, health, security, safety, freedom, peace, long life, possess land

**Curses for disobedience:** famine, poverty, defeat by enemies, unproductive land, no children, sickness, disease, unsuccessful, slavery, disasters, anxiety, despair, fear uncertainty, short life, lose land

It all looks very simple but the story of Job indicates that although these may be general principles, there are exceptions.

### **Why do the wicked prosper?**

Jer 12:1 You are always righteous, Lord, when I bring a case before you. Yet I would speak with you about your justice: Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all the faithless live at ease?

Ecc 7:15 In this meaningless life of mine I have seen both of these: the righteous perishing in their righteousness, and the wicked living long in their wickedness.

See also Job 21:1-21, Ps 73:1-12, Eccl 8:14, Hab 1:13, Mal 3:15

This apparent injustice is pointed out by many people in the Bible. The resolution comes at the final judgement!

## **Job - the full story**

Unfortunately, Job and his friends did not have the information we have in the first two chapters of the book of Job. This meant that their world view was limited. These chapters have an intriguing glimpse into heaven and conversations between God and Satan.

Satan claims that Job's fear of God and righteousness is only because God has blessed him with family, wealth and health and given him protection. If these are taken away, then surely Job will curse God.

God removes his protection from Job and Satan is allowed to cause loss of family and wealth and eventually his health.

The whole story is a test to see if a righteous man like Job can retain his faith and integrity even if everything in life goes wrong. Although Job struggles with the reasons for his problems and does not understand what is going on, he maintains his faith in God and does not curse God.



## **God's Protection**

As a general rule, the people of God can expect the protection of God. Here are some reassuring verses - but notice there are often conditions! Although God allowed Job considerable suffering, he never abandoned him and eventually restored him.

Psalms 20:1 May the Lord answer you when you are in distress; may the name of the God of Jacob protect you. 2 May he send you help from the sanctuary and grant you support from Zion.

Deuteronomy 23:14 For the Lord your God moves about in your camp to protect you and to deliver your enemies to you. Your camp must be holy, so that he will not see among you anything indecent and turn away from you.

Psalms 32:6 Therefore let all the faithful pray to you while you may be found; surely the rising of the mighty waters will not reach them. 7 You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.

Psalms 34:7 The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.

Psalms 41:1 Blessed are those who have regard for the weak; the Lord delivers them in times of trouble. 2 The Lord protects and preserves them—they are counted among the blessed in the land—he does not give them over to the desire of their foes. 3 The Lord sustains them on their sickbed and restores them from their bed of illness.

Psalms 91:14 "Because he loves me," says the Lord, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. 15 He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. 16 With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation."

Psalms 91:9 If you say, "The Lord is my refuge," and you make the Most High your dwelling, 10 no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. 11 For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways;

Proverbs 2:7 He holds success in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, 8 for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones.

John 10:27 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.

John 17:12 While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me... 15 My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.

## **Why do you have faith in God?**

People have faith in God for all sorts of reasons

- God is my provider
- God is my healer
- I like going to church
- I enjoy worshipping God
- I like being with other Christians
- God has been so good to me since I came to faith
- I have a good life and great family
- I have seen amazing miracles

What will you do if these things are stripped away like they were for Job. Where will your faith be then?

Our faith needs to rest in the person of God and Jesus Christ and not just what he does for me.

- I love God first whatever happens
- I know that God loves me
- I believe that I am saved by the work of Jesus Christ on the cross - I have eternal life
- I have decided to follow Jesus - he is my Lord and Saviour

Job 23:10 But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold.

## **Learning through trouble**

Although trouble is generally a bad thing, it can be used for our benefit. We can learn patience, humility and love, becoming more sympathetic to others as we go through difficult times ourselves. We are encouraged to endure hardship as discipline from our loving father and to use everything that happens as a learning experience of life (Heb 12:4-13). Sometimes going through trouble will bring us to serve God in a new way - don't forget the vows you made when you were in trouble (Ps 66:13-14)! Times of testing can increase faith (James 1:2-4).

## **World views**

### **1) Wishful Thinking**

God is a benevolent old man who will listen to our prayers and take us to heaven when we die.

### **2) Incomplete**

God is the creator and is loving and just. He rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked. Our ultimate fate depend on how we live our life here.

### **3) Bible**

God is the creator and loving, just, righteous and perfect.

The world we live in is not perfect but is spoilt by the sin of mankind and the existence of Satan and demons. This is linked to the fact that God gave free choice to some of his creation. Suffering arises from this imperfect world.

God sent his son Jesus into the world to bring the message of the Kingdom of God and to share in our suffering and offer himself as a sacrifice for sin. On the cross he carried our sins, suffering, griefs, sorrows and sicknesses.

Jesus rose from the dead, ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

We are saved by believing in Jesus Christ as our saviour - there is a promise of eternal life. As believers, our primary task is to continue the work of Jesus and spread the good news of salvation to rescue lost mankind.

We are provided with a powerful gospel message, open access in prayer to our Father, the authority of the name of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. Believers are the body of Christ here on earth and form the true church.

The world we live in still imperfect and life may not be easy but we know Jesus is victorious and that Satan will be destroyed eventually. Believers will live for eternity in a new heaven and new earth, sadly unbelievers will be lost in hell.

**Jesus - Man of Suffering**

Isaiah 53:3 He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

4 Surely he took up our pain (illness, sickness, disease) and bore our suffering (grief, sorrow) yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted.

5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.

- He was misunderstood and misquoted
- He was falsely accused
- One of his friends sold him for money and betrayed him with a kiss
- Another close friend denied knowing him three times
- His trial was unfair and biased
- He was sentenced to death by a man who absolved himself of responsibility
- He was beaten, slapped and spit upon
- A crown of thorns was pushed onto his head, he was beaten and mocked
- Nails were hammered through his hands and feet
- He was abused and insulted
- His crucifixion was a painful and humiliating torture

God became a man in Jesus and shared in many of our human sufferings. He displayed many of our common emotions - joy, anger, compassion and sorrow.

Isaiah describes the Messiah as a “man of suffering” but also as the one who would carry our suffering. As Jesus died on the cross, he accomplished a complete work carrying our sins, our sicknesses, our sufferings and our sorrows.

There is comfort and healing for the suffering soul in the cross of Christ. This is the place to go when you are suffering and the place you will find the most profound help from the one who understands how you feel and can bear it with you and for you.

Hebrews 5:7 During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. 8 Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered 9 and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him...

2 Corinthians 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.

**Suffering and persecution**

In the New Testament, the idea of suffering mainly applies to suffering for the gospel. Jesus brought trouble upon himself because he faithfully spoke the truth, demonstrated the power of God, helped the needy and exposed evil and hypocrisy (Matt 16:21). For this he was nailed to a cross. All through history righteous people have suffered at the hands of the wicked - it began with Cain and Abel (Gen 4:1-8, Heb 11:4, 1 John 3:12-13, Matt 23:33-36).

As Christians we can expect to experience persecution as we stand for the gospel, righteousness and truth.

- Jesus promised that persecution was part of discipleship (Mark 13:9-13) - this is the meaning of “carrying your cross” (Luke 9:23-27).
- Persecution may come from the world around (John 15:18-21), from earthly governments (Matt 10:17-20, Acts 12:1-3), religious authorities (Acts 5:17-18), and even your own family (Matt 10:21-23).
- Paul suffered much physical hardship, trouble and persecution because he faithfully followed Jesus (2 Cor 1:8-11, 2 Cor 6:3-10, 2 Cor 11:23-28, 2 Tim 2:9, 2 Tim 3:10-12). However he experienced joy and triumph in his sufferings (Rom 5:3, Rom 8:31-39, 2 Cor 7:4), knowing the power of God and being privileged to share in the sufferings of Christ (Rom 8:17, Phil 3:10, Col 1:24). The sufferings in this world are only temporary, making way for eternal glory (2 Cor 4:16-18).
- We should pray and support those who are being persecuted (Eph 6:19-20). We are called to persevere in persecution (Heb 11:32-12:3) and God has promised to help and comfort us (Heb 13:6).
- The book of 1 Peter is good reading for those who are being persecuted.

**The end of the age**

At the end of the age we can expect an increase in general trouble in the world and increased persecution of Christians (Matt 24:1-35, Rev 6:1-17:18). The Bible finishes with the return of Jesus, the destruction of evil and eternal trouble-free existence for the redeemed (Rev 18:1-22:5).

***Answer to the question!?***

The question of suffering is one of the most difficult issues Christians have had to grapple with and there is no easy and neat answer. It is very important to hold on to the fact that God is good, loving, just and righteous in all his ways (Ps 33:5, 89:14) Although God originally created all things good, it became spoiled through the activity of the Devil and demons and the sin of human beings. The only real explanation of why God allowed this is that he permitted free choice. For reasons best known to God, he continues to allow this imperfect situation to exist in the present age - suffering is one of the consequences. In Jesus Christ, God became a human being and shared the suffering that we experience. He knows what we go through. Jesus’s mission began the work of redemption here on earth as the Kingdom of God breaks through and we see glimpses of the powers of the age to come. The overall effect of the existence of sinful and saved humanity is that in the future age, there will be many redeemed human beings around the throne of God worshipping with the angels. God loves us very much despite our sin and has done all he can to ensure that we can be saved and spend eternity in a relationship with him.

Factor	Details
Fallen Creation	Causes random suffering to mankind including illness and natural catastrophes
Fallen Mankind	Causes unintentional suffering through activity, accident, technology failure and pollution. Causes intentional suffering through sin, abuse, bullying, unkindness, violence, hate, war, immorality etc.
The Devil/Demons	Causes unfair suffering to mankind. He may target particular individuals. He is evil and grossly unfair with no justice.
God	Occasionally causes suffering as part of his righteous justice on sinful mankind.

## **Natural and Supernatural**

We consider things to be natural when they obey the rules of nature - these are the universal scientific laws which normally apply to processes in our universe. Natural events are subject to cause and effect and we expect to find a scientific reason for everything which happens. The whole of science is built on the reliability of the laws of nature and the fact that we can explain and predict phenomena

We call events supernatural when there appears to be no rational or natural explanation and the usual scientific laws do not apply.

### **God is the Creator**

The Bible makes it clear that God, (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) is the only creator in the Universe. He created the universe out of nothing.

Creation was completed in Genesis 1 and he sustains creation - it continues to exist by his will. Also God is able to create or uncreate at will and make adjustments - we would perceive this as supernatural. There are no limits to God's miraculous powers!

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

Jeremiah 10:12 But God made the earth by his power; he founded the world by his wisdom and stretched out the heavens by his understanding.

Jeremiah 32:17 "Ah, Sovereign Lord, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you.

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

Colossians 1:15 The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Hebrews 1:2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. 3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.

Hebrews 11:3 By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

### **Scientific Creation**

Current science believes that all energy and matter (energy and matter are interchangeable) in the universe appeared in a fraction of a second at a singular point at the Big Bang and that this has been conserved as the universe has expanded for 13.77 billion years.

It is generally believed that matter/energy has not been created or destroyed since the Big Bang.

### **Angels**

Angels are created beings. They are spirits (Heb 1:14) without physical bodies, they do not marry (Matt 22:30) and seem to have no gender and do not reproduce. They appear to have no life span (Luke 20:35-36). They travel from place to place (Luke 1:26) and they can only be in one place at one time. They are moral beings (some sinned 2 Peter 2:4) and they are intelligent. They are usually invisible but occasionally become visible to human beings (Luke 2:13).

Angels worship around God's throne (Rev 5:11), they are powerful and are sent out to carry out his will (Ps 103:20). They bring messages from God, they help and protect us, they administer judgement and they war against demonic forces.

Since angels operate within the will of God, there are no limits to their supernatural powers coming from God.

### **Satan and Demons**

These are angels who have rebelled against God. Satan is the head demon. Demons still have their intrinsic power of angels but they are separated from God and so there are limitations.

- They can only operate by the permission of God (Job 1-2)
- Their knowledge is limited - they do not know the future - and they cannot read our thoughts (only God and Jesus do this in the Bible).
- Unlike God who is omnipresent (everywhere) and omniscient (knows everything), demons are limited in space and time and cannot see the whole picture.
- They are evil beings whose aim is to oppose God and his purposes.
- They utilise false religion, occult practices and deception.

### **Human Beings**

Genesis 5:1...When God created mankind (Adam), he made them in the likeness of God. 2 He created them male and female and blessed them. And he named them "Mankind (Adam)" when they were created.

Mankind is made in the image of God, male and female, and the species is called "Adam" by God. The image of God became spoiled by sin in the garden of Eden.

As human beings we have physical bodies and non-material part called soul or spirit. We also have the ability to reproduce after our likeness (Gen 5:3).

Human beings are restricted in space, time and knowledge and do not have intrinsic supernatural power. We are intelligent and have considerable ability to manipulate the physical world around us for our benefit - this can sometimes give the illusion of the supernatural.

### **God's Power**

God is able to use human beings to work mighty miracles - such as in the time of Moses and Elijah in the Old Testament. He also reveals his purposes to his prophets (Amos 3:7).

In the New Testament, Jesus opens the way for the Holy Spirit to be widely distributed on his followers (Acts 2:14-18). Spirit filled Christians can have considerable supernatural ability.

**They have the authority of the name of Jesus** (Matt 10:1, Mark 16:17-18, John 16:23-26, Acts 3:6-8, Acts 4:30, Acts 16:18)

**They have the power of the Holy Spirit** (Acts 1:8, 1 Thess 1:5)

The list of spiritual gifts gives an indication of the supernatural power available to Spirit filled Christians (1 Cor 12:7-11):

Information/Revelation Gifts: message of wisdom, message of knowledge, prophecy, distinguishing spirits, speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues

Power Gifts: faith, gifts of healing, miraculous powers.

### **Satan's Power**

Unfortunately, Satan is able to make human beings work for him.

He tempts them

He deceives them

He even possesses them

He has a whole counterfeit system of false religion, idolatry, superstition, false prophecy and magic.

He can give considerable supernatural power to human beings

His main aim to prevent us from coming to faith in God

## Job's Comforters

**3:1-26** Job's first speech, in which he expresses his grief. I wish I had never been born **3:25** What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to me. **26** I have no peace, no quietness; I have no rest, but only turmoil."

## First Round of Speeches (Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar)

**4:1-5:27** **Eliphaz's first speech: 'Be patient; all will be well – God looks after the righteous'**  
**4:6** Should not your piety be your confidence and your blameless ways your hope? **7** "Consider now: Who, being innocent, has ever perished? Where were the upright ever destroyed?  
**5:7** Yet man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward.  
**8** "But if it were I, I would appeal to God; I would lay my cause before him.

**6:1-7:21** **Job's second speech: 'God, leave me alone'**  
**6:4** The arrows of the Almighty are in me, my spirit drinks in their poison; God's terrors are marshaled against me.  
**6:14** "A despairing man should have the devotion of his friends, even though he forsakes the fear of the Almighty. **15** But my brothers are as undependable as intermittent streams,  
**7:20** If I have sinned, what have I done to you, O watcher of men? Why have you made me your target? Have I become a burden to you? **21** Why do you not pardon my offenses and forgive my sins?

**8:1-22** **Bildad's first speech: 'If you are innocent you will not die'**  
**8:2** "How long will you say such things? Your words are a blustering wind. **3** Does God pervert justice? Does the Almighty pervert what is right? **4** When your children sinned against him, he gave them over to the penalty of their sin. **5** But if you will look to God and plead with the Almighty, **6** if you are pure and upright, even now he will rouse himself on your behalf and restore you to your rightful place.  
**8:20** "Surely God does not reject a blameless man or strengthen the hands of evildoers.

**9:1-10:22** **Job's third speech, in which he acknowledges he cannot compel God to be just.**  
**9:2** "Indeed, I know that this is true. But how can a mortal be righteous before God? **3** Though one wished to dispute with him, he could not answer him one time out of a thousand. **4** His wisdom is profound, his power is vast. Who has resisted him and come out unscathed?  
**9:14** "How then can I dispute with him? How can I find words to argue with him? **15** Though I were innocent, I could not answer him; I could only plead with my Judge for mercy.  
**9:33** If only there were someone to arbitrate between us, to lay his hand upon us both,  
**10:8** "Your hands shaped me and made me. Will you now turn and destroy me? **9** Remember that you molded me like clay. Will you now turn me to dust again?

**11:1-20** **Zophar's first speech: 'Repent!'**  
**11:13** "Yet if you devote your heart to him and stretch out your hands to him, **14** if you put away the sin that is in your hand and allow no evil to dwell in your tent, **15** then you will lift up your face without shame; you will stand firm and without fear.  
**16** You will surely forget your trouble, recalling it only as waters gone by. **17** Life will be brighter than noonday, and darkness will become like morning.

**12:1-14:22** **Job's fourth speech: the friends' 'wisdom' and God's justice**  
**12:4** "I have become a laughingstock to my friends, though I called upon God and he answered — a mere laughingstock, though righteous and blameless! **5** Men at ease have contempt for misfortune as the fate of those whose feet are slipping.  
**12:13** "To God belong wisdom and power; counsel and understanding are his. **14** What he tears down cannot be rebuilt; the man he imprisons cannot be released.  
**13:15** Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him; I will surely defend my ways to his face. **16** Indeed, this will turn out for my deliverance, for no godless man would dare come before him!  
**13:23** How many wrongs and sins have I committed? Show me my offense and my sin. **24** Why do you hide your face and consider me your enemy? **25** Will you torment a windblown leaf? Will you chase after dry chaff?

**14:1** "Man born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. **2** He springs up like a flower and withers away; like a fleeting shadow, he does not endure.

## Second Round of Speeches (Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar)

**15:1-35** **Eliphaz's second speech: 'Beware the fate of the wicked'**  
**15:4** But you even undermine piety and hinder devotion to God. **5** Your sin prompts your mouth; you adopt the tongue of the crafty. **6** Your own mouth condemns you, not mine; your own lips testify against you.  
**15:20** All his days the wicked man suffers torment, the ruthless through all the years stored up for him.

**16:1-17:16** **Job's fifth speech: 'Shall I die without vindication?'**  
**16:2** "I have heard many things like these; miserable comforters are you all! **3** Will your long-winded speeches never end? What ails you that you keep on arguing? **4** I also could speak like you, if you were in my place; I could make fine speeches against you and shake my head at you.  
**5** But my mouth would encourage you; comfort from my lips would bring you relief.  
**16:9** God assails me and tears me in his anger and gnashes his teeth at me; my opponent fastens on me his piercing eyes. **10** Men open their mouths to jeer at me; they strike my cheek in scorn and unite together against me.  
**16:19** Even now my witness is in heaven; my advocate is on high. **20** My intercessor is my friend as my eyes pour out tears to God; **21** on behalf of a man he pleads with God as a man pleads for his friend.  
**17:11** My days have passed, my plans are shattered, and so are the desires of my heart.  
**17:15** where then is my hope? Who can see any hope for me? **16** Will it go down to the gates of death? Will we descend together into the dust?"

**18:1-21** **Bildad's second speech: more on the dreadful fate of the wicked**  
**18:5** "The lamp of the wicked is snuffed out; the flame of his fire stops burning. **6** The light in his tent becomes dark; the lamp beside him goes out.

**19:1-29** **Job's sixth speech, in which he reacts in anger**  
**19:2** "How long will you torment me and crush me with words? **3** Ten times now you have reproached me; shamelessly you attack me.  
**19:14** My kinsmen have gone away; my friends have forgotten me. **15** My guests and my maidservants count me a stranger; they look upon me as an alien.  
**19:21** "Have pity on me, my friends, have pity, for the hand of God has struck me. **22** Why do you pursue me as God does? Will you never get enough of my flesh?  
**19:23** "Oh, that my words were recorded, that they were written on a scroll, **24** that they were inscribed with an iron tool on lead, or engraved in rock forever! **25** I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. **26** And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; **27** I myself will see him with my own eyes — I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

**20:1-29** **Zophar's second speech: 'The wicked will suffer and be destroyed'**  
**20:4** "Surely you know how it has been from of old, ever since man was placed on the earth, **5** that the mirth of the wicked is brief, the joy of the godless lasts but a moment.  
**20:27** The heavens will expose his guilt; the earth will rise up against him. **28** A flood will carry off his house, rushing waters on the day of God's wrath. **29** Such is the fate God allots the wicked, the heritage appointed for them by God."

**21:1-34** **Job's seventh speech: 'The wicked prosper and the righteous suffer'**  
**21:7** Why do the wicked live on, growing old and increasing in power? **8** They see their children established around them, their offspring before their eyes. **9** Their homes are safe and free from fear; the rod of God is not upon them.  
**21:13** They spend their years in prosperity and go down to the grave in peace. **14** Yet they say to God, 'Leave us alone! We have no desire to know your ways. **15** Who is the Almighty, that we should serve him? What would we gain by praying to him?'  
**21:23** One man dies in full vigor, completely secure and at ease, **24** his body well nourished, his bones rich with marrow. **25** Another man dies in bitterness of soul, never

having enjoyed anything good. **26** Side by side they lie in the dust, and worms cover them both.

### Third Round of Speeches (Eliphaz, Bildad)

#### 22:1-30 Eliphaz's third speech: Job's great wickedness

**22:4** "Is it for your piety that he rebukes you and brings charges against you? **5** Is not your wickedness great? Are not your sins endless? **6** You demanded security from your brothers for no reason; you stripped men of their clothing, leaving them naked. **7** You gave no water to the weary and you withheld food from the hungry, **8** though you were a powerful man, owning land — an honored man, living on it. **9** And you sent widows away empty-handed and broke the strength of the fatherless. **10** That is why snares are all around you, why sudden peril terrifies you, **22:21** "Submit to God and be at peace with him; in this way prosperity will come to you. **22** Accept instruction from his mouth and lay up his words in your heart. **23** If you return to the Almighty, you will be restored: If you remove wickedness far from your tent

#### 23:1-24:25 Job's eighth speech: 'I have tried to live a righteous life — others are far more wicked than I.'

**23:8** "But if I go to the east, he is not there; if I go to the west, I do not find him. **9** When he is at work in the north, I do not see him; when he turns to the south, I catch no glimpse of him. **10** But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold. **11** My feet have closely followed his steps; I have kept to his way without turning aside. **12** I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread.

#### 25:1-6 Bildad's third speech: 'How can a man be righteous before God?'

**25:4** How then can a man be righteous before God? How can one born of woman be pure? **5** If even the moon is not bright and the stars are not pure in his eyes, **6** how much less man, who is but a maggot — a son of man, who is only a worm!"

#### 26:1-14 Job's ninth speech: 'Your advice has been useless'

**26:2** "How you have helped the powerless! How you have saved the arm that is feeble! **3** What advice you have offered to one without wisdom! And what great insight you have displayed! **4** Who has helped you utter these words? And whose spirit spoke from your mouth?"

### Job's Final Speeches

#### 27:1-28:28 Job's tenth speech: Job defends his integrity, the wisdom of God

**27:2** "As surely as God lives, who has denied me justice, the Almighty, who has made me taste bitterness of soul, **3** as long as I have life within me, the breath of God in my nostrils, **4** my lips will not speak wickedness, and my tongue will utter no deceit. **5** I will never admit you are in the right; till I die, I will not deny my integrity. **6** I will maintain my righteousness and never let go of it; my conscience will not reproach me as long as I live. **27:12** "But where can wisdom be found? Where does understanding dwell? **13** Man does not comprehend its worth; it cannot be found in the land of the living. **27:15** It cannot be bought with the finest gold, nor can its price be weighed in silver. **27:20** "Where then does wisdom come from? Where does understanding dwell? **21** It is hidden from the eyes of every living thing, concealed even from the birds of the air.

#### 29:1-31:40 Job's eleventh speech, in which he reflects upon his woes

**29:2** "How I long for the months gone by, for the days when God watched over me, **3** when his lamp shone upon my head and by his light I walked through darkness! **4** Oh, for the days when I was in my prime, when God's intimate friendship blessed my house, **5** when the Almighty was still with me and my children were around me, **6** when my path was drenched with cream and the rock poured out for me streams of olive oil. **30:1** "But now they mock me, men younger than I, whose fathers I would have disdained to put with my sheep dogs. **30:20** "I cry out to you, O God, but you do not answer; I stand up, but you merely look at me. **30:27** The churning inside me never stops; days of suffering confront me. **28** I go about blackened, but not by the sun; I stand up in the assembly and cry for help. **29** I have become a brother of jackals, a companion of owls. **30** My skin grows

black and peels; my body burns with fever. **31** My harp is tuned to mourning, and my flute to the sound of wailing. **31:1** "I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl. **2** For what is man's lot from God above, his heritage from the Almighty on high? **3** Is it not ruin for the wicked, disaster for those who do wrong? **4** Does he not see my ways and count my every step? **5** "If I have walked in falsehood or my foot has hurried after deceit — **6** let God weigh me in honest scales and he will know that I am blameless — **7** if my steps have turned from the path, if my heart has been led by my eyes, or if my hands have been defiled, **8** then may others eat what I have sown, and may my crops be uprooted. **31:32** but no stranger had to spend the night in the street, for my door was always open to the traveller **31:35** ("Oh, that I had someone to hear me! I sign now my defense — let the Almighty answer me; let my accuser put his indictment in writing. **36** Surely I would wear it on my shoulder, I would put it on like a crown. **37** I would give him an account of my every step; like a prince I would approach him.)  
The words of Job are ended.

### Elihu's speeches – A younger man speaks

#### 32:1-33:33 Elihu's first speech: 'Suffering is a warning from God and instructive'

**32:6** "I am young in years, and you are old; that is why I was fearful, not daring to tell you what I know. **7** I thought, 'Age should speak; advanced years should teach wisdom.' **8** But it is the spirit in a man, the breath of the Almighty, that gives him understanding. **33:19** Or a man may be chastened on a bed of pain with constant distress in his bones, **33:26** He prays to God and finds favor with him, he sees God's face and shouts for joy; he is restored by God to his righteous state. **27** Then he comes to men and says, 'I sinned, and perverted what was right, but I did not get what I deserved. **28** He redeemed my soul from going down to the pit, and I will live to enjoy the light.' **29** "God does all these things to a man — twice, even three times — **30** to turn back his soul from the pit, that the light of life may shine on him.

#### 34:1-37 Elihu's second speech: 'Job is wrong to accuse God of injustice'

**34:10** "So listen to me, you men of understanding. Far be it from God to do evil, from the Almighty to do wrong. **11** He repays a man for what he has done; he brings upon him what his conduct deserves. **12** It is unthinkable that God would do wrong, that the Almighty would pervert justice. **34:35** 'Job speaks without knowledge; his words lack insight.' **36** Oh, that Job might be tested to the utmost for answering like a wicked man! **37** To his sin he adds rebellion; scornfully he claps his hands among us and multiplies his words against God."

#### 35:1-16 Elihu's third speech: 'Job should not have complained but called to God'

**35:12** He does not answer when men cry out because of the arrogance of the wicked. **13** Indeed, God does not listen to their empty plea; the Almighty pays no attention to it. **14** How much less, then, will he listen when you say that you do not see him, that your case is before him and you must wait for him, **15** and further, that his anger never punishes and he does not take the least notice of wickedness. **16** So Job opens his mouth with empty talk; without knowledge he multiplies words."

#### 36:1-37:24 Elihu's fourth speech: in praise of the power and wisdom of God

**36:5** "God is mighty, but does not despise men; he is mighty, and firm in his purpose. **6** He does not keep the wicked alive but gives the afflicted their rights. **7** He does not take his eyes off the righteous; he enthrones them with kings and exalts them forever. **37:14** "Listen to this, Job; stop and consider God's wonders. **15** Do you know how God controls the clouds and makes his lightning flash? **16** Do you know how the clouds hang poised, those wonders of him who is perfect in knowledge? **17** You who swelter in your clothes when the land lies hushed under the south wind, **18** can you join him in spreading out the skies, hard as a mirror of cast bronze?"