

Discernment in a Day of Deceit – Part 2

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This morning, I want to encourage you to open your Bibles to the book of Job 14. Now the book of Job is one of those places in the Bible that we often don't spend a whole lot of time in but he is a character, an individual that we know a lot of. Job is synonymous with suffering and pain and anguish. He's mentioned two other specific places in the Bible outside of the book that is named for him, the book of James 5, it says to remember the patience of Job; and then more appropriately for today, in Ezekiel 14 Job is classified like men of faith as Daniel and Noah. By the time we get to chapter 14, these two incredible rounds of suffering have taken place, he's lost his children, his fortune, his fame, he's even lost his health; the Bible says from the top of his head to the bottom of his feet, he is filled with sores so much so that he's taking scraps of pottery and scraping himself. The majority of what we know as the book of Job, though, is a dialog between these "friends" and himself where they have joined up and they are speaking to the fact that they believe that based on his environment, based on his surroundings, that surely he has sinned against God; there is no way that he can claim that he has "been walking with God" through all the mess that has befallen him. Obviously, Job is pushing back and you and I have the benefit of hindsight. We not only can look back thousands of years in time, but we have chapter 42, we know that in the end of the story, God tells his three friends to repent and confess their sin, and Job, ironically, we'll get there, is actually told to pray for his friends. But in chapters 12 through 14, there's a turn in the book of Job we began this last week, for three chapters Job doesn't just respond to one of the respective friends, he actually addresses all of them and kind of the turn that's happening is the setting has become more corporate. This is no longer four men that are discussing and debating the philosophies of life, it's almost as if the community has gathered, the localized world has come, and people are beginning to ask themselves who is speaking truth, is it this lone man on the ash heap who's got sores from the top of his head to the bottom of his feet, or are these three pseudo-aristocrats that appear to have everything together?

We continue today in chapter 14 where Job is going to respond not only to those that are gathered but even moreso about how do you and I respond in a day of deceit. We are privy, for lack of better terms to so much disinformation, misinformation, and such was the case on the ash heap. Job was speaking one thing, everybody else another, the question is who's speaking truth? Today, as we continue in chapter 14, Job isn't just going to address those that have gathered there in that location, he's actually going to go beyond that to humanity at large and make some definitive statements about humanity and our relationship to God and God's view of humanity. In verse 1 it says,

1 Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. 2 He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. 3 And dost thou open thine eyes upon such an one, and bringest me into judgment with thee? 4 Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one. 5 Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass;

Now think about this statement to the crowd, he's basically stating to everybody that's gathered and to you and I today, that there's nothing that you can I can do as humanity to extend our lives beyond the bounds which God has already prepared for us.

Now let's talk about the process that he speaks of. Look in verse 1, it says, "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble." What does that mean? That means from the moment you breathe your first breath, you are already in the process of expiration, you are already in the process of dying. There's not one person listening to my voice or watching today or even in attendance today who can say they're in the process of "extending one's life," we're much the opposite. We literally are born into this world and we begin, even though young of age, even though full of vitality, we are in the "process of physical expiration," so much so that he says in verse 5 there is nothing that you can do to escape this process.

There's also a second process, he says that a man born of a woman is full of trouble. Now I know we live in a world today where so many people want to look at the glass proverbially half-full versus half-empty and say, "Well, I just don't think humanity is 'that bad.'" I can solve that perspective. It's real easy, all you need to do right now at this hour is volunteer in the preschool department and it will fix that problem because most of us when we came into the world, when we began to speak, we didn't begin with mommy or daddy, for most of us the first word out of our mouth, "No." Why? Because even in those infant stages, even before we take a step with our legs, humanity is born with this propensity not just to physically expire but to spiritually go wayward, to rebel against our Creator and the authorities by which he has placed in our life.

So what's the product? Notice verse 5, it says that he has appointed his bounds that cannot be passed. Humanity, as we're going to discuss today, has spent the entirety of our existence trying to find a way, trying to find a means to somehow go beyond that which God has orchestrated and arranged for our lives, yet the product is this, that each and every one of us will come to a place and a point in our life where we will physically expire, we will become what the Bible and our life calls deceased because God has appointed our days no matter how hard we try to extend them.

Now let's talk about the "when." Not at this moment, you've got to kind of take a step back because the chronology of this passage is actually not within the text of chapter 14, but I want to give you a little color commentary today because I believe that if we discover when this story took place, who's gathered around, then it will really help us to understand why they did not respond well. You say, "What do you mean, why they didn't

respond well?" Because as you continue chapter 14, you begin to get the sense that Job is sensing some nonverbal communication that is not in agreement to what he was saying.

So let's talk about the "when." When did the story take place? When was Job on the famous ash heap of life? Well, there's three friends that are mentioned. One of them is Bildad the Shuhite. Why is that important? Because those people in scripture were contemporaries of what we know as Jacob and Esau. Remember Jacob and Esau, the famous twins? Jacob would have the famous 12 tribes of which Judah would be the lineage of Jesus Christ the Messiah. Their dad was a man by the name of Isaac. Their grandfather was a man by the name of Abraham, "father Abraham," the patriarch of the faith of the Old Testament. Now why is this so important? Because Abraham was 175 years old when he passed away. That's a pretty long lifespan, but hold onto that just a moment. Now there's been some discussion and debate is there any chance that Job and Abraham would have known each other? Is there any chance that he would have known Isaac? We don't know, the Bible doesn't speak explicitly but what we do know is this, he lived in a day and in a place where if not directly exposed to these men, he at least would have been familiar with the instructions by which they claimed to be living out in their respective lives.

But let's take it out even a little bit further per this text today. Noah. You say, "Noah, what does Noah have to do with the book of Job?" It's fascinating. Did you know that the Bible says from Noah to Abraham, that's important, were 10 generations, and when you go back in the Bible, the Bible doesn't tell us the exact year that something happened, in fact, this is usually how it happened, it will say 21 years after their first child was born and three years before the great earthquake is when that... That's just typical biblical chronology and there's a lot of speculation of the when and the where and such, but by very strict biblical chronology, listen to this, Abraham would have been 58 years old when Noah died. Now think about that for just a moment. You talk about two pillars of the faith, you talk about two men, one who got on a boat and survived the flood, and another one who started what we know as the lineage of the Messiah. Now the Bible doesn't say that they had coffee together every week. The Bible doesn't say that they got together for family gatherings and such. All we know is that chronologically speaking even if you want to take it a little bit looser than that, those who preceded Abraham, his father, his father-in-law etc. would have lived roughly at the same time of Noah.

Now I know what you're thinking: how does this relate to the text? Do you realize that when Noah died, he was 950 years old? Now for those of you that want to complain that if it doesn't hurt, it doesn't work, he was 500 years old when he started building the boat. Why is this important? Because Noah saw a man by the name of Methuselah who died the year they got on the boat who was 969 years of age. He had a great great great grandfather that lived to be 777 years of age and he died at 950. Ten generations later, Abraham dies at 175, an age that today most of us would give the entirety of our resources and means to acquire half of that.

What is the process? Those that were gathered around the ash heap the day, those that were gathered in the days of Job, had witnessed with their eyes, had heard with their ears

those before them that had lived centuries longer than even they were expecting in their life. It's an interesting product that's formed. Today, in our culture today, it's much the reverse of this. In fact, we believe because of medical science, technology etc., most of us, at least statistically speaking, believe that our children and grandchildren will outlive us. I mean, that's just part of it, right? But you know, not the case about 120 years ago. In fact, at the turn of the century into the 20th century, if you were a male living in the Western civilization, your average age of death was 48, and yet today we're considered much longer living than even that.

But I want you to think about what was happening. Can you imagine living in a time where you knew you would live less than your grandparents, living in a day where you had relatives that lived to be 400 and you didn't know if you were going to make it to 100. When Job is speaking these words that you cannot go beyond the bounds that God has given, it wasn't just to you and I who have a basic expected range of life to live, they were actually seeing lifespans shortened every single generation, and what kind of product does that lead us to? Debating and questioning how small is it going to get? For 10 consecutive generations, everybody was living a smaller expanse of time. Those men that gathered there knew their children probably wouldn't live as long as they were going to, their grandchildren would even have a smaller lifespan. So what does Job say? There is nothing that you can do to change this.

Now the "how" is interesting. Look in verse 7, Job compares the scenario to a tree. It says,

7 For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. 8 Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground; 9 Yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant. 10 But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost,

What Job is communicating to them is a very specific process. How can they know that Job is telling the truth and everybody else is not? He says just look at trees. Now again, last week Job said, "Hey, look at the cattle of the field and look at the fish of the sea, look at the fowls of the air, do they not tell us how the Creator has orchestrated things?" But why would he bring up a tree? Because with a tree, when you cut it down, unless you remove the root from the ground, you just take it down to the bottom of the stalk per what Job 14 says, trees have this innate ability to rejuvenate, to re-bud, and to come back to life. In fact, gentlemen, some of you have experienced what I have in life where we're asked of those who are very important in our lives to remove certain bushes, remove certain trees, and we don't want to go to the labor of taking it out by the roots and digging it up, so we just take a chainsaw out and we just hack it down, right? What happens a year later? "I thought I told you to take it down?" What happens is we get in this pattern of continually going out there because it will continue to bud but that is not the case with man. In fact, what Job is saying is those individuals that were gathered around had all experienced man "being cut down," he does not come back even as a tree will season after season after season.

Which gives us such an interesting product. The fact that he would use a tree, this is interesting because for most of us, myself included, wherever the Lord has us living, there are trees around us and if you've never really thought about it, let me give you some insight: whatever your property is, whatever your house is, wherever you reside, most likely statistically there are trees in your backyard that were here before you were born and will still be here long after you're dead. Trees have this incredible lifespan that even puts Noah to shame. Don't believe me? Go to Gethsemane on the eastern side of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, that famous garden where Jesus prayed the night before his crucifixion where it's named after a press or that which is to put pressure upon us, this very day there are olive trees in the garden of Gethsemane that date before the "time of Christ." In other words, there are trees right now that were alive and doing what trees do the year that Jesus Christ came in flesh; they were alive doing what they do the year that he sacrificed himself, his blood shed for humanity; they were there there the year that he rose from the grave; and I've got news for you, if the Lord doesn't tarry much longer, they'll be there when he splits open the skies. There are trees that if they could speak and testify have seen more in their existence than generations of humanity combined. He said, "Look to the tree, they'll outlive you and if you cut them down, they'll come right back the next season."

You know, I mentioned to you earlier, you get the feeling that the nonverbal response of the crowd was not going as Job had hoped or wished, which leads to the famous, what? What does humanity do when put in a position where we realize that we can't obtain what we desire? What does humanity do when we realize that our greatest expectations will rarely, if ever, even be half realized? We get creative. We try to extend ourselves beyond the bounds that we know exist. In fact, Job addresses this in verse 14, notice what he says,

14 If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.

Now this is a very emphatic, very simplistic statement, but actually what Job is saying is that there comes a time in every man's life where they will die. So what is it that humanity does? Humanity has consistently come up with and invented processes to circumvent this. In days past, it was a stone or a cup or whatever it may be, that if we could drink from it or acquire it, it would allow us to live a life longer than the bounds that we knew had "been settled from above." But today, oh humanity, have we gotten creative because we have technology, we have access to microscopes and telescopes like no other time period in history, and we, humanity, we are of the belief today that we finally can pull it off. Oh, that's right, there are groups of very intelligent people right now that are telling us that if we just wait a little bit longer that technology is about to be here that will allow us to finally obtain immortality. There's only one problem with these groups, they don't believe the technology will be here until 2050, so for most of us, we're "out of luck." But let's just say for the sake of argument that the year 2050 comes, you're still kicking and breathing, and you have "access" to what they claim will be immortality at the hands of man. What will that look like? How will it appear? Well, best case

scenario and most least likely to occur, it will be a biological immortality, synthetic organs, the use of DNA manipulation, whatever it may be, to somehow articulate a construction of our body to where it will reverse the aging process, and much like trees rejuvenate itself. It sounds good but really on the scale of possibility is the least likely.

The next option according to those who are trying all these things, is what many of them call the android option. You say, "What's the android option?" Well, George Lucas in "Star Wars" had it right, they're going to stick your head on a robot. That's right, you can live forever as your own version of R2D2. That's right, you can just put your head on a robot, you'll be good to go. Now this isn't joking, this is serious. Humanity, the best we've got right now is saying we might can get you immortality if we stick you on a robot, but even they're suspect about that.

There's one final option that those that are "in the know" believe that could potentially finally obtain immortality, they call it the virtual option. You say, "What's the virtual option?" They're going to upload your consciousness into the cloud. I didn't say the clouds, I said the cloud. That's right, the virtual world, the world of pixelization, computers etc., that somehow, someway.

Now we look at these and even with man's best efforts, we're 2-3 decades away from anything that remotely could be contrived as extending beyond what God would have for us. So what happens? We end up with a product that is completely against what God has orchestrated. You know, it's interesting, Matthew 24, Jesus is speaking of the end times and he says you're going to know you're close to the end because it's going to look like the days of Noah. That's interesting. Noah, that guy that was 10 generations before Abraham that's mentioned alongside with Job in Ezekiel 14, why the days of Noah? And today is not the time to get into all the details of Genesis 6, all I know is this: it says that humanity was getting together, they were having children, and the Bible describes the children, listen to this, as men of renown. That doesn't just mean mighty, it doesn't just mean physically powerful, there's a description or a definition of that phrase which means this: without death. I don't know how, I don't know what, there's a lot of speculation that in Noah's day they tried to figure out a way how can we go beyond what God has already prescribed? Is that not what we're doing today? Every time you turn around, whatever the methodology may be, humanity is saying how can we live a little bit longer, how can we extend beyond?

So why, why would Job address this? Why would he say it in the manner that he did? Look in verse 18 and 19. He says,

18 And surely the mountain falling cometh to nought, and the rock is removed out of his place. 19 The waters wear the stones: thou wastest away the things which grow out of the dust of the earth; [listen to this last statement] and thou destroyest the hope of man.

Why? Because all these constructs, all these ideas, all these theories, all these philosophies, for mankind that comes out of woman like a flower that quickly fades, that

is quick to fall into trouble, the only piece of hope that fleshly humanity has is that somehow, someday one day we'll come up with a way to fix this mess. But what happens? Time after time, we look through the microscope, we look through the telescope, we come up with all these great advances in technology, it might get us six more months, it might get us six more years, it might even get our head on a robot so that one day we will not perish that we know is most assuredly the design and the consequence and the destiny of mankind.

You see, the process is that humanity will always strive to do it a different way than God's way. Humanity will always aspire to life eternal apart from subjecting and submitting themselves to the will and the way and the word of God in their life. But do you remember what Job said earlier up in verse 14? He said, "But my change cometh." You know, there's a reason that John 3:16 is so beloved in the Bible, it's not just because that's the one verse that the majority of people have memorized, "God so loved the world he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him," listen, "should not perish." You see, deep down in the core of every single one of us, that's what bothers us so much. No matter how much education we get, no matter how much medicine we have our hands on, no matter how much resources we have, we know deep down inside there's going to come a day when it comes to an end, That we should not perish, what does Jesus promise? That we may have everlasting life. Last time I checked, the only one to come back from the grave was Jesus Christ, the one who said, "I will give you everlasting life."

So why would we fall for the misinformation? Why would we fall for the deceit that somehow, someday humanity's got this thing figured out? Job is saying, "Guys, you can come up with any scheme you want, any plan you want, you can articulate any philosophy you want, but if you do it contrary to the way that God has set it up, it will always systematically fail every single time."

What does he say to them? They are without hope. You know, the two most powerful emotions in this world are hope and hopelessness. If you have hope, you can get through the worst of occasions. If you're hopeless, it doesn't matter how good it appears, correct? And he says that humanity apart from the Lord is without hope. You and I in the world that feeds us so much information and so much communication, can actually be agents of hope when we realize that the only one who is able to do as we hope and desire for is the Lord himself, he is the truth in the midst of a world of so much deceit and misinformation.

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. Maybe today is one of those days where the Spirit of God took the word of God and did a work in your life. Maybe today you'd be willing and honest and say, "You know what? I've listened to the pundits for too long. I've listened to the agents of communication too much. I've bitten the bait of all they've tried to sell me throughout the years." Maybe today is that day where you come to that point in your life and you say, "You know what? It's time I did it God's way." The Bible says whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. That means the only means of hope, the only means of eternal life, the only means of forgiveness is in the person of Jesus Christ, not another philosophy, not another project, not another means.

Maybe today you're that person who says, "You know what? It's time. It's time where I finally did it God's way." Can I encourage you just to cry out to him. It doesn't mean you do it audibly or out loud. It doesn't mean that you say the same words that I would say or somebody else would say. But maybe your heart's cry today would go a little something like this. "God, today I recognize that, God, I've got a sin problem. God, I've been places I should have never been. I've done things I should have never done. God, I've said things I should have never spoken and, God, you know I've thought things that should have never crossed my mind. And God, your Bible, your word makes it very clear that the wages of my sin is death but it also says but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Today, God, I'm drawing a line in the proverbial sand of faith. I believe that Jesus Christ and nobody or nothing else is the answer to my sin problem. God, I believe, I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he was willing to come on my behalf, he was willing to reject temptation and live a sinless life on my behalf. God, today I believe that when he allowed himself to go to his cross, he was bearing the pain and the punishment of my sin and, God, today I believe that three days later when he rose from the grave, the very trees that were there when he was born, the very trees that were there when he died, the very trees, Lord, when they saw him raise from the grave, God, he made it possible for my sins to be forgiven and my soul to be saved. God, today I don't have all the answers to the issues, the struggles and the problems of life but there's one thing I know, that the only one who can fix or take care of my sin problem is Jesus Christ. I'm asking you to forgive me. I'm asking you to save me based on what he has done on my behalf and nothing of myself. The best way I know how, I just want to turn my live over to you."

With our heads still bowed and our eyes still closed, maybe you're that person today who had that conversation with the Lord. In just a moment, I'm going to pray for us, we're going to stand and sing and I just want to invite you to step out and step forward and, in fact, we think that decision is so important we've got a team set aside, we've got a room set aside who would love to hear your story and pray with you or pray for you. Or maybe you say, "Well, I'm already a believer." Well, maybe today the reason you need to step out and step forward is like those seven individuals that have gone through the baptismal waters this morning, maybe you need to follow and demonstrate your faith to the world. Or maybe you're saved and you've been baptized and you say, "This is our home. This is our church." Maybe you're like those on our campus already today who said, "This is where I need to be." We invite you to come. And maybe today you say, "Pastor, I've got all that covered." In just a few moments, we're going to go back into that world of deceit, that world of darkness, and you've got a very important decision to make regarding your life, which voice will you listen to?

Lord Jesus, as we come to this time of decision, it is our prayer that your voice and your voice alone would be whom we listen to. Lord, whether it's a decision for salvation, the decision for believer's baptism, a decision to be a part of this great church, or just a decision to go back out into a dark world and be the salt and the light that you've called us to be, may we respond to you and no other voice. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

If you would, stand with me as Bruce leads us. Whatever decision, we'll be right here at the front.