

## **The Problem of Suffering: A Stumbling Block for Believers**

St. John of Rochester Parish

Wednesdays: March 3, 10, 17 and 24, 2021

7:30 to 9:00 p.m.

Dr. Joseph G. Kelly, Professor Emeritus of Religious Studies at Nazareth College

For people who believe in God, a difficult question always perplexes us: if God is a good God and truly loves and cares for his people, why is there so much pain and suffering in the world? Put in contemporary terms: "Why do bad things happen to good people?" This 4-week Lenten series will look at several **Biblical insights** that shed light on this problem. Hopefully, this study will allow us to come to a better understanding of how God works in our human and imperfect world, leading us to find greater consolation and peace in these troubled times.

### **Some Basic Considerations:**

- 1) Why Evil is a Problem
- 2) Establishing a World View
  - a) secular
  - b) Philosophical
  - c) Psychological/Sociological
  - d) Theological

### **I. A Just God in Covenant**

- a) Collective Retribution: Genesis 2:4b-3:25 (2<sup>nd</sup> Creation Story-9<sup>th</sup> Cent - J)  
Deuteronomy 4  
Joshua 7:1-26 (Achan)  
II Samuel 11:1 - 19:1 and I Kings 1-2  
(Court History)
- b) Individual Retribution Ezekiel 18:1-32 and 33:1-20  
Psalms: 1 and 7
- c) Other World Daniel 12:2  
Wisdom 5:1-2

**The Deuteronomic Principle:** If you keep the law, you will be blest; if you do not keep the law, you will be punished.

## II. Cosmos and Chaos

John 9: 1-2 - key passage

Genesis 1:1 -2:4a (1<sup>st</sup> Creation Story-6<sup>th</sup> Cent- P)

Matthew 13:24-30

John 16:33; 17:9-19

Romans 8:14-39

Revelation 21: 1-4

## III. Job's Dilemma

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|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| a) Retributive Justice Questioned | Job 3:1 - 14:22 (Dialogue - 1st Cycle of Speeches) |
| b) Intimacy with God              | Job 38:1 - 42:6 (An Experience of God)             |
| c) "This is a test..."            | Job 1 - 2 (Prologue and Epilogue of Job)           |

**The Dialogue: Chapters 3-42:6 (Pre-Exilic, before 586 BCE)**  
**The Prologue (Chapters 1-2) and the Epilogue: Chapter 42:7-17**  
**(Post-Exilic after 586 BCE)**

## IV. Redemptive Suffering

- |                        |                                                                                |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| a) In Second Isaiah    | Isaiah 42:1-9<br>49:1-6<br>50:4-11<br>52:13 - 53:12                            |
| b) The Paschal Mystery | I Corinthians 1:18-25<br>2 Corinthians 1:3-11 and 4:7-18<br>Philippians 2:6-11 |