

Job's Hope After Heartache

King's Grant Baptist Church
2008 January Bible Study

Who Wrote Job?

- Is it a Compilation of Moses?
 - A Story from before Moses' time.
 - Many words and phrases are characteristic of Moses.
 - The Talmud gives Moses credit.
 - The theme of suffering fits Moses and the suffering in Egypt.
 - Uz was next to Midian.
 - Moses had the authority and interest to introduce this non-Hebrew story to Israel.

When Was Job Written?

- When the events actually happened (c. 2000 B.C.).
 - No reference to Exodus or Law.
 - The characteristic patriarchal name for God (*Shaddai*) is used over 30 times.
 - Wealth is determined in terms of livestock rather than gold and silver.
 - The family-clan social unit is pre-Mosaic, Job is the priest of his family.
 - The Chaldeans are still nomads.
 - Rarity in use of God's covenant name *Yahweh* suggests a pre-Mosaic date.
 - Longevity of life is similar to the patriarchal period (42:16 – over 140).
- When the story was actually written down (c. 1500 B.C.).
 - It has been suggested that while living in Midian, Moses compiled Job from records taken of the conversations in Uz by Elihu.
 - If this is true, then Job was composed by Moses between 1485 and 1445 B.C.
- Some scholars suggest it was written during Solomon's time:
 - Leisure time to pursue more philosophical matters.
 - Similar praise for wisdom is included (Proverbs 8 and Job 28).
 - Solomon's era pondered wisdom.
 - Wide knowledge of nations that were obtained during Solomon's era (c. 950 B.C.).
- Difficulty: the large time lag between the events and the writing, over 1000 years.

To Whom Was Job Written?

- If we adopt the suggestion that Moses wrote Job, it would seem natural to assume that Moses, while living for forty years in Midian, compiled the book for the suffering Israelites who were being oppressed by Pharaoh.

Where Were They Located?

- Job lived in Uz (northern Arabia) and his friends came from nearby countries.
- At the time, the children of Israel were living in Egypt and Moses was exiled to Midian, just adjacent to Uz.

Why Was Job Written?

- The basic question of the book appears to be, “Why do the righteous suffer if God is all-loving and all-powerful?”
- But suffering itself is not the central theme; rather the focus is on what Job *learns* from his suffering.
 - God’s sovereignty over all creation!
 - We will get into why would God allow this to happen to an innocent person, as we look at the arguments from Job’s friends.
- There are basically three reasons for the book of Job:
 - The Historical Purpose.
 - The Doctrinal Purpose.
 - The Christological Purpose.

Why Was Job Written?

- The Historical Purpose.
 - Originally Job may have been composed as part of an ancient "court" proceeding or perhaps of a dialogue of the wise men of the land.
 - Possibly Moses saw in God's dealing with Job a parallel as to why God allowed His people Israel to suffer.
 - In any event, Job was composed in the face of the suffering of God's people to provide them consolation.
 - Job reminds God's people of His providential purposes in allowing their pain (5:17; 23:10).
- The Doctrinal Purpose.
 - The central teaching of Job appears to be that the presence of pain is allowed by the providence of God for the purifying and perfecting of His people (Job 23:10).
 - Job reveals five ways in which God uses hardships that are reflected in Deuteronomy 8...
 - Compared to Deuteronomy 8.
 - To humble us (Dt 8:2, Job 22:29)
 - To test us (Dt 8:2, Job 2:3)
 - To rearrange our priorities (Dt 8:3, Job 42:5-6)
 - To discipline us (Dt 8:5, Job 5:17)
 - To prepare us for future blessings (Dt 8:7, Job 42:10)

- Compared to Science.
 - Job 38-42 gives us the most intensive survey of the creation of the world in the Bible.
 - Job teaches the earth is suspended in empty space (26:7).
 - Job teaches that the earth is a sphere (22:14). The “*vault*” word is “circle; dome”; here it is the dome that covers the earth, beyond which God sits enthroned.
 - Leviathan* (3:8; 41:1, 15; Ps 74:14, 104:26; Isa 27:1) – great dragon, serpent, a “mythological sea monster that devours.” Could it be a reference to dinosaurs?

- The Christological Purpose.

- Job acknowledges that there is a Redeemer (19:25-27)
- Job cries out for a Mediator (9:33; 16:19; 25:4; 33:23-28); a counterpart to “the *Adversary*”
- Job knows he needs someone who can explain the mystery of "suffering by suffering, the just for the unjust" (1 Pet 3:18, Heb 4:15)
- To bring victory over evil, sorrow and pain (Rev. 21:4)

What Is Job All About?

- If the Book of Job is about the suffering of the righteous. It asks:
 - What is the significance of suffering?
 - What is the purpose of pain?
 - Why calamities?
- There are several answers suggested in the book...
- “Why?” Question, answered by:
 - The Author—suffering is *pernicious* (Satan is behind it) Job 1-2
 - Job—suffering is a *puzzle* (Sadistic attitude brings it on) Job 3
 - Friends—suffering is *punitive* (Sin must be punished) Job 4-31
 - Elihu—suffering *purifies* (Shortcomings bring on pain & also purity) Job 32-37
 - God—suffering is *providential* (Sovereignty of God is the source, one with a larger picture) Job 38-42

What Is Job All About?

- There is some truth in all these views of suffering. But as applied specifically to Job's situation...
- The friends were wrong: Job was not suffering because of his sins (see Luke 13:1-5).
- God allows Satan to inflict suffering,
 - Even on those who have not brought it on themselves by sinful living. Why?
 - So that in His providential purposes He can purify and perfect His people (23:10).

A Survey of Job

- Job is Divided into Three Sections:
 - The *affliction* of Job (1-2) behind the scene
 - The *discussion* with Job (3-37) on the scene
 - The *restoration* of Job (38-42) beyond the scene
- Without the first and the last sections, the middle section would be an insoluble mystery.
- When one recognizes the movement of Satan *behind* the scene in instigating suffering and the activity of God *beyond* the scene in rewarding the sufferer, then the suffering *on* the scene becomes both understandable and tolerable.

Affliction Behind the Scene (1-2)

- The Afflicted (1:1-5; 2:9-13) a Summary
 - Job's Place: Job was from Uz, 1a
 - Job's Piety: Job was blameless/upright, 1b
 - Job's Posterity: Job had 10 children, 2
 - Job's Prosperity: Job was rich and respected, 3
 - Job's Practice: Job regularly sacrificed, 4-5
 - Basically, he was the candidate least likely to be inflicted with calamity... brought on neither by himself or by a good God.
 - Here lay the apparent mystery of his situation.
- The Afflicter (1:6-12; 2:1-6)
 - Let's look at some issues regarding the antagonist in the story...
 - The sons of God – 1:6
 - The *Satan* – 1:6-7
 - The heavenly court – 1:6
 - The wager – 1:10-11
 - Serving God for nothing? 1:9
 - To ruin Job for nothing? 2:3

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Affliction Behind the Scene (1-2)

•The Afflicter (1:6-12; 2:1-6)

–Let's look at some issues regarding the antagonist in the story...

- The sons of God – 1:6
- The *Satan* – 1:6-7
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•Questions to Consider

–Who were the “sons of God?”

- The “sons of God” in the OT is generally taken to refer to angels.
- They are not actually “sons” of *Elohim*; the idiom is a poetic way of describing their nature and relationship to God.
- The phrase indicates their supernatural nature, and their submission to God as the sovereign Lord (offering counsel, 15:8).
- In the pagan literature, especially of Ugarit, “the sons of God” refers to the lesser gods or deities of the pantheon.
- By the way... UGARIT was an important city in Syria whose excavation has provided tablets giving the closest primary evidence available for reconstructing the Canaanite religion Israel faced.

–Who was *the Satan*, and why might God accept his dare?

- The word means “adversary” or with the article “the adversary” – here the superhuman adversary or the Satan.
- The word with the definite article reveal that the *meaning of the word should receive prominence*. A denominative verb meaning “to act as adversary” occurs.

–The *Satan* is the great accuser of the saints (see Zech 3 where “Satan was standing there to ‘satanize’ Joshua the priest”)

–Rev 12 identifies him with the Serpent (in Genesis). He came among the angels at this time because he is one of them and has access among them. Even though fallen, Satan has yet to be cast down completely.

–What is the heavenly court and why is *the Satan* there?

- A common theme is Hebrew history (Ps 58 and 82), known in other religions as well.
- In Mesopotamia they believed a heavenly council met on New Year's Day to determine the fate of the earth in the coming year.
- Remember that *the Satan* is the accuser or the adversary, more than he is “the devil” or “evil one” in Christian theology. Here he was a member of the council doing God's bidding on earth.

• *The Satan* plays the role of District Attorney, roaming the earth in search of sinners who should be brought to justice before God.

– What is the meaning behind the wager?

• God has pride in Job's behavior, 1:8

• The accuser is skeptical, 1:9-10

• The *Satan's* challenge puts God in a tight spot:

– If God refuses, the *Satan* could suggest God is afraid of losing, that Job serves for selfish motives;

– If God agrees, Job will suffer for no reason.

– There is no easy way out!

• The Afflicter – Summary

– The author of Job depicts the ultimate source of evil in the world as personal—*the Satan* (or the accuser, see Zech 3, Rev 12:10).

– “The pernicious plans of this perverse plotter are the ultimate source of both sin and suffering.”

– *The Satan* continues to be the accuser of God's people (cf. Rev. 12:10).

– *The Satan* is not so much against Job as he is against God.

Affliction Behind the Scene (1-2)

• Questions to Consider

– Have you experienced a time when you felt like Job? How have you responded to times of loss, pain or suffering?

– What events or situations have caused you to ask, “Why did this happen?” or “How could God let this happen?”

– How do you feel about God making a bet with *the Satan* to test Job's integrity or faithfulness? Does this change or affect your image of God?

– Do you believe God is inherently worthy of worship, or is your view of God dependent on what God has done for you lately?

• How would your life demonstrate the answer to that question?

• Practically, if there is no clear connection between following Christ and going to heaven, would you be in church today?

• The Affliction (1:13-19; 2:7-8)

– In three unheralded and lightning-like strokes Job lost:

• His oxen & donkeys and servants

• His sheep and servants

• His camels and servants

• His sons and daughters

– Trouble came from every point on the compass:

• Sabaeans – traders from Arabia (south)

• “Fire from God” – originating from the Mediterranean Sea, storms coming from the sea (west)

• Chaldeans – Aramean nomads (north)

• Winds – generally from the desert (east)

- Job’s worship: (1:20)
 - Rent his clothing – stripped of rank/position.
 - Shaved head – removal of crowning glory, removal of his highest blessings.
 - He fell to the ground and worshipped.
- Job’s woe: (1:21)
 - Sitting on a pile of ashes...
 - Scraping the bleeding boils on his body...
 - Job managed to retain his faith and say: "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."
- Job’s wife: “Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!” (2:9)
 - Perhaps she found it hard to see Job suffer.
 - Perhaps she was feeling anger toward God.
 - Observe the word, *barak* – commonly translated “curse” usually is translated as a euphemism for “bless!”
 - Job 1:5, 11, 2:5, 9 (1Kgs 21:10, 13, Ps 10:3)
 - Job 1:10, 21, 42:12 – bless (prosperity, words)
 - Job 3:1, 8 – other words used to “curse”
 - Perhaps she was encouraging Job to persist in his integrity and bless God, even though he might die.
 - Maybe she added temptation – like Eve?
 - But, Job’s response is that she is foolish? (perhaps she meant “curse” – then God would kill him and put Job out of his misery – like committing theological suicide).
- The Affliction (1:13-19; 2:7-8)
 - The point is that Job remains steadfast in spite of *the Satan’s* attempts to provoke him.
 - While Job later (3:1-19) curses the day he was born, it is important to remember that he never curses God (*with his lips* – 2:10).
- Questions to Consider.
 - What can we expect from God?
 - Does God bring evil upon us, or allow evil to come, for divine purposes that we can neither see nor understand?
 - What about “Everything happens for a reason? God controls every action for some unknown purpose?”
 - Sovereignty vs. free will? Can it be that evil is a natural consequence of human choice (ours or others).
 - Why do we worship God?
 - Do we worship for selfish reasons?
 - Are we motivated by the promise of prosperity, *quid pro quo*?
 - Do we serve in order to get behind His “wall” or “hedge” of protection? (1:10)
 - Because of forgiveness and the promise of everlasting life?
 - Fire insurance? Is that the point of worship?

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Part 3

Discussion on the Scene (3-37)

•The Lamentation of Job (3)

- Imagine if your closest family member or friend had never been born – how would your life be different?
- What day qualifies as your worst ever day of your life?
- What calamities have caused people to ask the “why” question?
- There is the change from prose to poetry. What does this change mean?
- Should poetry be interpreted the same as prose, or are the rules different?
- Have you ever found rest in reading poetry?
- After *what* does Job speak? What is the relationship between their prolonged silence and Job's eventual speech? (3:1).
- If you had been present during Job's lament, how would you have responded?
- Is Job speaking logically? Theologically? Emotionally? How can you tell?
- How close does Job come to cursing God? (3:1-10) Why does he curse the day of his birth rather than curse God? Is there a difference?
- In 3:11-26, instead of cursing, what is Job doing? Who is he questioning? Is it OK to be angry with God?
- By cursing and questioning his own existence, how does this implicate God?
- How may complaints and questions be evidence of hope?
- In light of chapter 1, what irony do you see in 3:23? Who was hedging before? How about now?
- When if ever have you felt like life was not worth living? What were you feeling? What were the circumstances? What did you end up doing?
- How do you respond to rhetorical questions such as Job asks? (3:11-12; 16; 20-23)
- What three friends do you have that are better listeners than most? What might you want to share with them now?

•The Lamentation Summary (3)

- Job broke his silence with a lamentation on his pathetic condition.
- He wished he had never been born or that he had died immediately after birth.
- He regretted that he had not been carried from the womb to the tomb in order that he might have been spared all his suffering.

•Accusation of Friends (4-31)

- Perhaps Job had sinned privately or even by proxy through his children, but surely he had committed some great sin or he would not be subject to this great calamity.
- Their accusation continued through a three-round debate in which each friend spoke with Job replying to each speech.
- The participants spoke in order of age.

- Their approach may be characterized like this...
 1. Eliphaz the theologian based his arguments on a vision of God's greatness.
 2. Bildad the traditionalist based his view on time-honored concepts of justice.
 3. Zophar the moralist based his opinions on a consensus of human wisdom.
- Each round of debate gains in emotional intensity (more heat / less light!).
- Job takes almost twice as long to answer as they do to accuse.
- In each case, Job defends his innocence.
- It is in the process of defending his own righteousness that Job becomes self-righteous (32:1-2) and deserving of the condemnation God gives him in the last chapter.
- Job's Basic Complaints:
 - God does not hear me (13:3, 24; 19:7; 23:3-5)
 - God is punishing me (6:4; 7:20; 9:17)
 - God allows the wicked to prosper (21:7)
- Accusation of Friends (4-31)
 - In each round except the last, all participants speak.
 - The friends each accuse, and Job replies to each.
 - In the last round, the frustrated Zophar fails to speak, apparently because he sees no hope of convincing the stubborn Job.
 - Job spins out five more chapters after his accusers have run out of steam (27-31).
- Intervention of Elihu (32-37)
 - A young observer (and possibly stenographer) of the debates jumps in when the others had given up in their attempt to convince Job of his sin.
 - His view was a bit more moderate than that of the friends and he serves as a herald for the voice of God in the last chapters. Basically, humble yourself and submit to God.
 - Elihu suggests that Job's pain is more for the purification of his life than for the punishment of his sins (23:10; 33:19).
 - Job's suffering is directed at the self-centered pride of life into which he has now clearly fallen in the process of defending himself (32:1-2; 33:17).

Restoration Beyond the Scene (38-42)

- Revelation of the Lord (38-41)
 - Elihu served as a kind of John the Baptist, preparing the way of the Lord.
 - Out of the whirlwind God spoke in sovereign majesty and power, asking Job questions that revealed his mortality and ignorance. "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding" (38:4).
 - There follows a series of scientific questions which even modern science has not mastered. Job was left almost speechless.

•Questions to consider:

- Do contemporary Christians serve God only for what they get out of the relationship?
- Do we serve in order to gain God's favor and blessing?
- If there was no connection between spiritual devotion and personal prosperity, would you still serve God?
- Have you ever gone through a time when your foundational beliefs no longer seemed to work?
- How does Job's experience speak to our efforts to provide comfort to the hurting?
- Are we more likely to defend God for fear that our own convictions might collapse, or are we willing to risk questions?
- Is your relationship with God something like an "if...then" contract (like the friends)? If so, is this relationship one of faith or an expectation of a guaranteed return?
- What is the role of human faith in the face of divine silence?

•Repentance of Job (42:1-6)

- When Job did reply to God it was in repentance and in recognition of God's sovereignty. "I know that you canst do all things.... therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (vv. 2, 6).
- One of the lessons of Job's life is that even the righteous man needs to repent.
- Even the "perfect" man has pride and needs to be purified and perfected.

•Reward of God (42:7-17)

- In the end Job was lavishly rewarded: God gave Job twice as many worldly goods as he had had in the beginning.
- God gave Job the same number of children as he had to begin with.
- Note also that he never really lost the ones who died, since they would be his in the resurrection (19:25-26).
- So "the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning..." (42:12).

•Questions to consider

- A quote from a Hebrew scholar, M. Tzevat: "The God who speaks to man in the book of Job is neither just nor unjust. He is God."
- Is God's answer to Job really an answer? How do we make sense of it? Is it fruitless to question God?
- How does Job's restoration affect the story? Does it make it easier or more difficult to interpret? Does it reinforce the argument of Job's friends?

•Reward of God (42:7-17)

- More precious than any other reward given to Job, however, was the reward of a crown of life, that is, "*God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.*" (James 1:12).
- James wrote a most fitting conclusion for the Book of Job: "*We give great honor to those who endure under suffering. For instance, you know about Job, a man of great endurance. You can see how the Lord was kind to him at the end, for the Lord is full of tenderness and mercy.*" (James 5:11).