

# Job's Hope After Heartache

King's Grant Baptist Church

2008 January Bible Study

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).