

Job 1 • Ground Zero

Introduction

This week's study in Job examines the character and spiritual integrity of Job. Some background information may be helpful and help explain why the study of Job is placed where it is in the Walk with the Word reading plan.

Job was a wealthy landowner living in "the land of Uz." No one knows exactly where Uz was located, but it is thought to have existed in northeastern Arabia, in or near modern-day Iraq. Though he was a Semite (descendant of Shem), he was not a Hebrew. (The title "Hebrew" was not associated with the Israelites until many years later. From a Hebrew perspective, however, Job is considered a Gentile.) Most likely, Job was a contemporary of Abraham and worshipped the same God, as did another Gentile, Melchizedek (Genesis 14:18-19).

Therefore, since the reading plan is basically chronological, the events in this book probably occurred before the first books of the Bible were given through Moses and even before "Israel" came into existence. As a "book" handed down from generation to generation, it's interesting to note that this would be one of the few teachings in existence during Israel's 430 years of slavery in Egypt, possibly making it the oldest and "first" book of what would become the Bible.

A brief outline of the Book of Job is as follows: Disasters (1-2), Discourses (3-41), Deliverance (42).

¹There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job; and that man was blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil. ²Seven sons and three daughters were born to him. ³His possessions also were 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 female donkeys, and very many servants; and that man was the greatest of all the men of the east. ⁴His sons used to go and hold a feast in the house of each one on his day, and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. ⁵When the days of feasting had completed their cycle, Job would send and consecrate them, rising up early in the morning and offering burnt offerings according to the number of them all; for Job said, "Perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." Thus Job did continually.

[Read v.1-5]

Q: Describe the character of Job, and what each of these descriptions mean.

A: Verse one states that he was "blameless" (can find no fault in), "upright" (righteous in regards to his understanding of the laws of the land and the law of God), "fearing God" (reverent and humble before God), and "turning away from evil" (always doing the right thing). This points to a man of great integrity and spiritual character. On the other hand, Job was not a perfect man or without sin. It appears, however, that he had put his trust in God for redemption and faithfully lived a God-honoring, sincere life of integrity and consistency personally, in his marriage (2:10), and as a parent (1:4,5).

Q: How had the Lord blessed him?

A: Seven sons (to carry on his name and run the farm), three daughters (to run the house), sheep (food and clothing), camels (transportation and beasts of burden), oxen (food and plowing), donkeys (beasts of burden and transportation) and many servants. He was equal to Abraham in wealth and prosperity. He lived in a walled city with gates where he held a position of great respect.

Q: How did Job intercede on behalf of his children? What's the key concern Job has on behalf of his children?

A: He continually rose early in the morning on a regular basis and offered burnt offerings on their behalf. Thus he cared about them and functioned as priest for his family. His key concern is that they would not "curse God in their hearts."

Q: What does it mean to "curse God" in one's heart?

A: To curse God would fall under the category of ultra-blasphemy. Such a curse was not unintentional but willful and premeditated. When curses were pronounced, it was a prescription for bad things to happen. In the Bible, a curse is more than just wishing something bad to happen to someone; it is the official pronouncement that bad things **will** happen. (God placed a curse on the serpent and upon Cain.) Curses carried with them a power all their own.

To curse God, therefore, would be to turn against Him to such a degree that if one could, he or she would cause bad things to happen to God. To turn against God to the degree that one curses Him would be passing a point of no return. In Job's day, it was believed that such a curse against God would result in the immediate death of the individual at the hand of God (cf 2:9).

Who would utter such a curse? Only those who felt that God had been unfair, unjust or unworthy of one's worship. Therefore, they would want nothing more to do with God. The whole story of Job is based around the question, "Will Job curse God or not?"

Application: *What should be the role of the Christian parent in regard to his or her children? What do you do faithfully today to protect your children from turning against God?*

[Read v.6-12]

⁶Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. ⁷The LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?"

Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it."

⁸The LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil."

⁹Then Satan answered the LORD, "Does Job fear God for nothing? ¹⁰Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. ¹¹But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face."

¹²Then the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him."

So Satan departed from the presence of the LORD.

Q: What is the scene in heaven? What does the name Satan mean?

A: God calls together His archangels. Satan, one of the fallen ones, comes before God. The scene is very much like Jesus calling the twelve apostles, Judas being one of them. Being an angelic being (and not of flesh), he is able to appear before God, his Creator. "*Satan*" means "adversary," and he is known in Scripture as The Adversary or The Accuser. In this scene, he assumes the role of the accuser of God's servants. Satan is not omniscient and therefore must "roam."

Q: Who initiates the dialogue between God and Satan?

A: Make no mistake about it, God does. Therefore, in Job, though the temptations come from Satan (to curse God), the test comes from God. This situation is similar to the time when Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness. It was the Holy Spirit who led Jesus into the wilderness (the test), but it was Satan, The Adversary, who tempted Jesus.

Q: How does Satan accuse Job (and indirectly, God)?

A: Being emboldened by his success at causing the fall of Adam and Eve—and later the flood—Satan was confident that even God's best man, His best example, would also fall if adequately provoked. After all, Satan himself had fallen; why, therefore, shouldn't all? Satan raises the penetrating question that might well be asked by anyone, perhaps even Job himself: Does Job serve God with pure motives, or is he in it only as long as the blessings flow?

Q: What does Satan tell God Job will do if God allows all his blessings to be taken away?

A: Satan states quite confidently that Job will curse God to His face. And that's the theme of the book. Will Job, in spite of his great grief and losses, pain and physical disability, remain faithful to God? It is a test of cosmic proportions and begs the question, "Can a man's faith in God prevail in spite of horrendous trials and tribulations?" This is a foreshadowing of Jesus' death on the cross and the persecution of Christians throughout the ages.

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Q: Does Job know anything about the conversation between God and Satan going on in heaven? Why is this important?

A: There's no indication that Job ever learned about this conversation. This is important, especially while bad things are happening, because had he known about the conversation, he would have been able to rely upon knowledge and not faith. Therefore, God had to keep Job in the dark. God had to keep from Job the knowledge of this conversation in order to provide an adequate test of his faith and trust in God.

Application: *When we are in the midst of trials, tribulations or persecution, we want to know why. Why is it important that God may never reveal to us the answer?*

[Read v.13-22]

¹³Now on the day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, ^{14a}a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, ¹⁵and the Sabeans attacked and took them. They also slew the servants with the edge of the sword, and attacked and took them. They also I alone have escaped to tell you."

¹⁶While he was still speaking, another also came and said, "The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, and I alone have escaped to tell you."

¹⁷While he was still speaking, another also came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three bands and made a raid on the camels and took them and slew the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you."

¹⁸While he was still speaking, another also came and said, "Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, ¹⁹and behold, a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people and they died, and I alone have escaped to tell you."

²⁰Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped. ²¹He said,

"Naked I came from my mother's womb,
And naked I shall return there.
The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away.
Blessed be the name of the LORD."

²²Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God.

Q: In what way was Satan allowed to take away Job's income, food reserves, transportation, financial security and hopes for the future?

A: Every prop a man needs to survive is taken away, including his family. The only exception is his wife who Satan leaves to be used as his mouthpiece (see 2:9).

Q: What does Job do in verse 21 that is contrary to Satan's expectation that Job will curse God?

A: Job blesses God, the exact opposite of what Satan predicted Job would do.

Application: *Based on Job's response, what is the example for Christians to follow when everything goes bad? When **anything** goes bad? How does a Christian's proper response to trials, tribulations and persecution help bring an end to Satan's influence in the world, to overcome evil?*