

BIBLE SURVEY

JOB

"There was a man in the Land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright and one who feared God and shunned evil. And seven sons and three daughters were born to him. Also, his possessions were 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yolk of ox, 500 female donkeys and a very large household. So this man was the greatest of all the people of the East.

"And his sons would go and feast in their houses, each on their appointed day, and would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. So it was, when the days of feasting had run their course, that Job would send and sanctify them and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings, according to the number of them all. For Job said, 'It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts'. Thus Job did regularly.

"Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord and satan also came among them. And the Lord said to satan, 'From where do you come?' So satan answered the Lord and said, 'From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it' Then the Lord said to satan, 'Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?' So satan answered the Lord and said, 'Does Job fear God for nothing? Have you not made a hedge around him, around his household and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands and his possessions have increased in the land. But now stretch out your hand and touch all that he has and he will surely curse You to Your face!'

"The Lord said to satan, 'Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person.' So satan went out from the presence of the Lord." Job 1:1-12

Spiritual Warfare

The Book of Job is one of the oldest books of the Bible. It is a dramatic poem, one of the great masterpieces in literature. In both form and content, the Book of Job is unique. Job lifts the curtain for us and grants us a glimpse of some of the spiritual warfare dynamics that are so often behind our trials here on earth.

This ancient Book of the Bible presents a unique insight as to the spiritual warfare which surrounds human experience. The central character is Job, who is described as the greatest and richest man in the East, a man who was blameless in the sight of God, one who feared God and shunned evil. Yet he experienced great material loss, family tragedy, physical affliction, mental turmoil, marital dissention and the worst grief imaginable.

The Book of Job presents the drama on earth in the light of a dialogue in Heaven. The angels come before the Lord, and it includes the fallen angel, satan. He prowls around seeking whom he can devour. God challenges satan to consider His servant Job, an outstanding man, blameless and upright, one who fears God and shuns evil.

The Challenge

In response, satan declares that Job only serves God because of His protection and provision. *"Does Job fear God for nothing? Have you not made a hedge around him, around his household and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But now stretch out your hand and touch all that he has and he shall surely curse You to Your face!"* Satan means "accuser".

God accepted this challenge and permitted satan to test him. This began the tribulations of Job.

The Loss of Property

A messenger came running to Job with the shocking news that while his oxen were ploughing in the field, a band of Sabeans attacked and carried them off. They put the servants to the sword. The messenger was the only one who escaped. While he was still speaking, another messenger came and reported that fire had fallen from the sky and burned up the sheep and his servants. The messenger was the only one to escape from that disaster. Before Job even had the time to absorb this second shocking report, a third messenger reported that the Chaldeans came down in three raiding parties and had stolen all his camels. They put his servants to the sword and he was the only one who had escaped.

The Loss of Family

Before Job could recover from these blows, a fourth messenger ran up to deliver word of the most disastrous tragedy. Job's sons and daughters had been killed when a storm hit the house in which they were feasting and it had collapsed on them. In a single day, all of Job's earthly possessions were gone and his beloved children, his seven sons and three daughters were all dead.

In great grief Job rose up and tore his robe, shaving his head in mourning. He fell to the ground and worshipped God declaring: *"Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord."* Job 1:21

In all this Job did not sin, nor charge God with doing wrong (Job 1:22).

A Disastrous Reversal of Fortunes

In a few brief hours Job had passed from being one of the richest and most fortunate of men to being one of the most tragic. He had passed from prosperity to poverty. The blessings of God had been removed from him. The protections that he had enjoyed had been withdrawn. Yet Job could declare that he had come into the world with nothing and that he would leave the world with nothing. The Lord has given and the Lord has taken away. May the Name of the Lord be praised.

The Steadfastness of Job

Chapter two of Job begins with another presentation of the angels before God in Heaven. Satan is again confronted with the matchless testimony of Job: *"Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil? And still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited Me against him to destroy him without cause."* Job 2:3

The Loss of Health

Satan answered the Lord: *"Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh and he will surely curse You to Your face! And the Lord said to satan: 'Behold he is in your hand, but spare his life.' So satan went out from the presence of the Lord and struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. And he took for himself a potshard with which to scrape himself while he sat in the midst of the ashes."*

Job had lost his property, he had lost his precious children. Now he had lost his health. Some have noted that the only thing Job did not lose was his wife. Others had pointed out that she actually added to his affliction: *"Then his wife said to him: 'Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!' But Job replied: 'You speak as one of the foolish women speak. Shall we indeed accept good from God and shall we not accept adversity?' In all this Job did not sin with his lips."* Job 2:6-10. Some wives and husbands are more of a curse than a blessing to their partners. Job's wife was no threat to satan's cause and no asset to God's Kingdom. There was no need for satan to remove Job's wife - she was serving his interests and adding to Job's afflictions.

Loyalty and Trust

Job was smitten with a loathsome disease, boils from the sole of his feet to the crown of his head. He sat amongst the ashes and scraped himself with pieces of pottery. Yet after enduring the heaviest blows imaginable, the loss of property, the loss of family and the loss of health, Job responded: *"Shall we receive good at the hand of God and not accept adversity?"*

Job proved his loyalty and devotion to God. He was not only serving God for provision, prosperity and protection. He was serving God for His own sake, in spite of all of his afflictions.

The Loss of Reputation

Then came the fourth trial, the loss of his reputation and good name among his friends. Job's friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Baldad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite heard of the sufferings of their friend and they came to mourn with him and to comfort him. When they saw him sitting on the ash heap scraping himself with pottery, they could hardly recognise him as the man that they had known in his days of prosperity.

Job's Comforters

For seven days they sat in eloquent silence and sympathy alongside Job on the ash heap, speaking not a word because they saw that his grief was great. Often that is the kind of friends we need to be, not those who rush in with a solution and with words of counsel, but who can sympathise with the deepest afflictions. Silence can be eloquent in its support. They were there, with him and he could see that they cared.

Sin and Suffering

However, chapter three begins with Job cursing the day of his birth. *"May the day perish on which I was born, and the night in which it was said 'a male child is conceived'".* Job 3:3

His friends tried to console him and expressed the traditional views about suffering: God does not punish good men, only bad ones. If evildoers seem to prosper for a while, their sins will catch up with them. At first Job's comforters were courteous and polite, exhorting him to be strong and to trust in God. They expressed some surprise that he who had instructed many and had strengthened the weak should now faint, as he himself came under affliction.

They maintained that God does not permit the innocent to perish. They warned him not to lift himself up against the providence of God. Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his maker? They warned Job not to claim righteousness in the sight of God.

Trouble is part of the human experience: *"Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward."* The wise thing would be not to question God's way, but to trust Him. Happy is the man whom God corrects. Therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty. If Job would humble himself and admit his sins, then it would go well with him.

Yet as Job continued to maintain his innocence, his three friends, who had come to comfort him, became heated in their arguments accusing Job of unworthiness. Where there is great suffering, there must be great iniquity. Job must be a hypocrite, in his former pretensions of piety and his present assertions of innocence. The hope of the hypocrite shall perish. He must have taken a pledge from his brothers for nothing. He must have stripped the naked, refused water to the weary, withdrawn bread from the hungry, sent widows away empty, broken the arms of the fatherless. It must be because he is a great sinner that all these judgments had fallen upon him.

In indignation, Job denied these charges. He declared that: if he had been guilty of any of them, if he had walked in pride, if he had been deceived, if he had caused the eyes of the widow to fail, if he had selfishly eaten his food alone, if he had seen any perish for lack of clothing, or made

gold his hope, then he could understand why he had suffered. He longed for vindication. *"Oh that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come to His seat! I would present my case before Him and fill my mouth with arguments... look, I go forward, but He is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive Him ...But He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me I shall come forth as gold."* Job 23:3-10

How Can a Man Be Righteous Before God

Bildad asks the great question: *"How then can a man be righteousness before God?"* Job 25:4
It was considering that momentous question that preoccupied and consumed Dr. Martin Luther as he sought peace with God. How can a sinful human being be made righteousness before a Holy God? Luther found the answer to that in the book of Romans: *"The Just shall live by Faith."*

By Faith Alone

Job stands as an ancient example of one who lived by faith. In the face of unrelenting disaster, and surrounded by what he called, *"miserable comforters", "physicians of no value"*, Job declared: *"For I know that my Redeemer lives and that He shall stand at the latter-day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."*

Job rebuked his comforters; why should they torment him with their lectures? God does not need them to plead for Him. Job reflected: *"Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He comes forth like a flower and fades away, he flees like a shadow and does not continue."* Job 14:1-2

Challenging God

Job longed for justice. He wanted to defend himself. He despaired of the presumption of guilt from his friends. At one point Job became so weary of seeking justice that he called on God to hand him the list of charges against him. Job pleaded for God to reply to him.

God Speaks to Job

Then God interrupted the dialogue between Job and his friends. *"Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said 'Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you and you shall answer Me. Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? To what were the foundations fastened? Who laid its cornerstone when the morning stars sang together; ...or who shut in the sea with doors... when I made the clouds its garment... have you commanded the morning...? Have you entered the springs of the sea... Have the gates of death been revealed to you...? Have you comprehended the breath of the earth? ...Have you entered the treasury of snow, or have you seen the treasury of hail, which I have reserved for the time of trouble, ... By what way is light diffused, or the east wind scattered over the earth? Who has divided a channel for the overflowing water, or a path for the thunderbolt, to cause it to rain on a land where there is no one, a wilderness in which there is no man; to satisfy the desolate waste and cause it to spring forth the growth of tender grass? ...Do you know the ordinances of the Heavens? Can you set their dominion over the earth? Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, that in abundance of water may cover you? Can you send out lightening...? Who has put wisdom in the mind? Or who has given understanding to the heart? Who can number the clouds by wisdom? Who can pour out the bottles of Heavens... Can you hunt the prey for the lion or satisfy the appetite of the young lions, ...who provides food for the raven, when its young ones cry to God...? Do you know the time when the wild mountain goat bear young, can you mark when the deer gives birth? Have you given a horse his strength? Have you clothed his neck with thunder? Does the hawk fly by your wisdom and spread its wings towards the South? Does the eagle mount up at your command, and make its nest on high? Shall the one who contends with the Almighty correct Him? He who rebukes God, let him answer it."* (Job 38 and 39)

"Then Job answered the Lord and said: 'Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer you? I lay my hand over my mouth. Once I have spoken, but I will not answer. Yes, twice, but I will proceed no further'." Job 40:3-5

Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said "Would you indeed annul My judgment? Would you condemn Me that you may be justified? Have you an arm like God? ...Look now at the behemoth, which were made along with you... his strength is in his hips, and his powers in his stomach muscles. He moves his tail like a cedar; the sinews of his thighs are tightly knit. His bones are like beams of bronze... indeed the river may rage, yet he is not disturbed; he is confident, though the Jordan gushes into his mouth." Job 40:6-23

"Can you draw out leviathan...?"

Job Answers God

"Then Job answered the Lord and said: 'I know that You can do everything. And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You. You asked, who is this who hides counsel without knowledge? Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me which I did not know... I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes see You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes'." Job 42:1-6

God Rebukes Job's Friends

After the Lord had spoken these words to Job He rebuked the friends and counsellors of Job: "My wrath is aroused against you... for you have not spoken of Me what is right, as my servant Job has." Job 42:7

If we know so little of the ways of God in nature, and if His ways in creation are often beyond our understanding, we should not be surprised that there are mysteries of providence that we cannot understand. Although God does not apparently enlighten Job as to the reason for his sufferings, His questions place everything into perspective. Job's friends are rebuked for having assumed that his sufferings were the result of his own personal sin. Job's faith and trust is vindicated. As Job had said: *"Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him."* Job had in faith declared: *"When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold."* And he did. *"All things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose."* Romans 8:28

When the disciples asked the Lord Jesus: Whose sin caused this man to be born blind, his own sin or that of his parents? The Lord Jesus responded that neither his parents nor his sin caused this, but that he may show forth the Glory of God (John 9).

God knows our sufferings. God limits our trials. We may not always understand God's Will, but we can trust Him. God will ultimately reward faithfulness and punish wickedness.

The Book of Job is a tremendous comfort to those who suffer. It is also a stumbling block to those who teach the health and wealth gospel. To the prosperity cult preachers who advocate, *"name it and claim it", "gab it and grab it"*, the message of the Book of Job is incomprehensible. Therefore in many cases they attack Job as a man who must have been guilty of terrible sin to have been afflicted with such terrible suffering. However, God describes Job as blameless, a God-fearing man who shunned evil. ***"The fear of the Lord - that is wisdom and to shun evil is understanding!"*** Job 28:28

The Book of Job concludes with this vindication of Job: *"Now the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; for he had 14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, 1,000 yolk of oxen, 1,000 female donkeys. He also had seven sons and three daughters... in all the land were found no women so beautiful as the daughters of Job, and their father gave them an inheritance among*

their brothers. After this Job lived 140 years and saw his children and grandchildren for four generations." Job 42:12-16

Scientific Insights in the Book of Job

1. The earth floats free in space. *"He hangs the earth on nothing..."* Job 26:7
2. Oceans contain springs (Job 38:16).
3. Light can be divided (job 38:24). Only 4 centuries ago, Sir Isaac newton discovered that white light can be parted into 7 colours – What the Bible revealed almost 4,000 years ago.
4. The Hydrological cycle (Job 36:27-28). God *"draws up drops of water which distil as rain from the mist, which the clouds drop down"* and pour abundantly on man (Evaporation, atmospheric transportation, distillation and precipitation).
5. The universe is expanding (Job 9:8).
6. Light travels in a path (Job 38:19).
7. Air has weight (Job 28:25).
8. Light can be sent and manifest in speech (Job 38:35).
9. Life is more than matter and energy (Job 12:7-10).
10. Dinosaurs are described in Job 40:15-24.

"For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God. Whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!" Job 19:25-27

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