

Job

1. Behind the scene

April 29, 2012

After a simple glance, many people would comment, "What is this Book of Job all about? It seems so irrelevant to our lives." But in the core of this 42 chapter Book, we find the questions we would ask to our God at least one time or more in our life: "Why, God?" or "How can a good loving and righteous God allow that horrible thing to happen to these nice people?"

Pain and suffering are the ingredients of the story of faith in God. That is what the Book of Job is all about. As we follow Job on his journey, we'll see his faith in God severely tested. Stripped of his precious children and his possessions, he stood beside ten fresh graves on a windswept hill, crying out to God with some of life's most difficult questions.

No doubt, you are asking God a few questions yourself. Perhaps you are in the middle of illness that changed the whole situation of your life; or death of one of your beloved family member; or your spouse has deserted you and leaving an enormous void in your life; or maybe the loss of your job; or going through a seemingly never-ending financial crisis, etc.

I am NOT going to guarantee you that you will get the complete answer from God at the end of our study. If you do, you should teach us. But we will be wise to submit to our all-knowing, all-powerful, and ever-loving God. As we live through this unfair life, we will borrow insights, godly principles, and wisdom from this Book to continue to depend on our God's strength. In my opinion, the Book of Job contains far more practical theologies than what we assumed about this Book.

A. THE AUTHOR AND THE TIMELINE

We do not know who wrote the Book of Job. Some commentators dare to say that it was written by Moses, but they don't have any concrete evidence to back it up.

Judging by the Hebrew literary style it uses, some scholars consider the Book of Job to be the oldest Book of the OT before Abraham's time.

B. THE THEME OF THE BOOK

To illustrate God's sovereign permission of suffering; and a godly man's unwavering faith in his God.

C. STRUCTURE

I divide this Book into 4 sections:

- 1) Chapter 1-2: Introduction to the suffering
- 2) Chapter 3-37: Discussion of the suffering – "Did not, did too."
- 3) Chapter 38-41: Words of God
- 4) Chapter 42: Submission under the suffering and restoration from the suffering

D. JOB'S PROSPERITY

Job 1:1-5 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. 2 And seven sons and three daughters were born to him. 3 Also, his possessions

were seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred female donkeys, and a very large household, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the East. 4 And his sons would go and feast in their houses, each on his appointed day, and would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. 5 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.

Job's story begins almost like a typical fairy tale, don't you think? We might as well add, "Once upon a time," as we start to read this first paragraph.

Here is a man who was very wealthy. Check out his financial portfolio. He was totally loaded. I bet that he even had several gold trimmed red convertible chariots from Ferrari and Lamborghini in his garage.

In those days, wealth was measured primarily in terms of land, animals, and servants; and Job had all three in abundance. But being rich did not turn him away from God. He acknowledged that the Lord gave this wealth to him, and he used his wealth generously for the good of others as we will learn later. Job would have had no problem obeying what Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 6.

1 Timothy 6:9-10 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

The land of Uz was probably in or near Edom. V1 says, "blameless and upright". Does it mean that Job was sinless and perfect? No, he was a man of integrity which we will learn from this Book. While sin is vertical, blameless is horizontal. Job's first recorded act in this Book is to offer sacrifices for sin.

The phrase behind "blameless and upright" explains why. He feared God and shunned evil. That is the foundation of his character. You see, fame is what other people know about you; but character is what God knows about you.

Job was a godly father who was interceding on behalf of his grown children. I hope that all of you dads and granddads are doing exactly that for your children regardless of their ages. You may say, "I've not been as godly as Job." That doesn't matter. Start from this moment. Ask the Lord to work in your life first, then your children's lives. Let your children start to see your godly examples as the Lord works in your life, language, characters, and temper.

E. BEHIND THE SCENE, IN THE SPIRITUAL REALM

Job 1:6-11 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them. 7 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." 8 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?" 9 So Satan answered the Lord and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing? 10 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. 11 But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!"

Just six verses into the Book of Job we are suddenly transported to heaven. In this unusual scene, we are permitted to witness something found nowhere else in Scripture: a dialogue between God and satan regarding a righteous man on earth, Job.

Without this prologue of the Book of Job, we would consider that Job was nothing more than a self-righteous snob as three of his so-called friends did due to the lack of a heavenly perspective.

Among the rank of heavenly angels, satan was there before the Lord. The terms "the sons of God" is used in the OT to describe angelic beings.

Let's stop here for a moment to clear one very important matter: Satan is NOT equal to God in any form or shape. God is the Creator; satan is a mere creature. God is all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-present. Though satan is a very strong spiritual being as a fallen former archangel, but not all powerful; smart and sly, but not all-knowing; and cannot be everywhere at the same time. Human, especially Hollywood movie makers inflate satan's status, importance, and power as the opposite of God to satan's delight. Satan's rival would be Michael the archangel.

What satan said in v7 reminds me of what apostle Peter told us in 1 Peter chapter 5:
1 Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

God brought up Job's name in the sense of bragging about his godliness and character. At this point, just about all of us are thinking, "Oh Lord, please don't brag about us to satan."

Please note what the Lord said about Job's character in v8:
Job 1:8 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?"

One of many false doctrines by the Faith Movement Bible teachers is that Job was not righteous and brought the disasters upon himself. They are insisting on the same argument about the three ungodly friends whom the Lord declared they were wrong about Job later in this Book.

In reply to the Lord, satan did what he does best – false accusation.
Revelation 12:10 Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.

Satan reveals his essential cynicism. When satan accused Job falsely, he was accusing God, because he implied that the Lord had bribed Job into obedience. Satan thought that adversity could make Job move from his faith in God to cursing His name and desert Him.

F. WITHIN GOD'S PERMISSION

Job 1:12 And 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.

The attack is on God through Job, and the only way the accuser can be proven false is through Job. So Satan was given limited but gradually increased access to Job – first to his possessions and his family, and finally to his physical well-being.

Satan can go against God's people only within God's permission, and God uses it for their good and His glory.

The revelation of the heavenly scene behind the earthly scene helps us to understand the later comment in the Book of James on Job:

James 5:11 Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord--that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.

If you are not familiar with the Bible or you are reading this portion of the Bible for the first time, the whole story sounds like fiction. That reminds me of what Lord George Gordon Byron, a.k.a., Lord Byron who was a famous British poet of the 19th Century said, "Truth is always strange; stranger than fiction."

G. PRINCIPLES

- 1) We cannot see our enemy Satan. But he is very real and has one purpose against us – destroying our testimonies of Jesus Christ.
- 2) We don't want trials, but our Lord permits them in His ultimate wisdom for our own good.
- 3) We don't understand God's plan, but His plan is best for us and our spiritual growth.