

JOB

LESSON THREE

COMMENTS ON THE BOOK OF JOB

Chapter One

- I. There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and turned away from evil.
 - A. Where is Uz?
 1. To every Israelite living west of the Rift Valley of the Jordan, everything across the river was “the east.” It ranged from Midian in the south (Judges 6:3) to Aram-naharaim in the north (Gen. 29:1).
 - a) It was the outskirts of civilization.
 - b) It included every type of person from marauding bandits to settled farmers and nomadic shepherds. (Judges 6:3, 33; 7:12; 8:10.)
 - c) In turn, it was exposed to marauders from further east, such as the Chaldeans and Sabeans (Job 1:15, 17).
 2. Here lived a man whose name was Job.
 - B. Who is Job?
 1. Job is given no tribal or other identification.
 2. He was a believer in the God of creation.
 3. A location to the north-east of the Sea of Galilee would harmonize with his manner of life; it is supported by tradition from as early as Josephus.
 - C. Was Job a real person?
 1. His book begins simply – there was a man whose name was Job. It has the ring of real history.
 2. Job is mentioned in Ezekial 14:14, 20 as a hero of faith.

3. His name is found throughout the second millennium B.C. as an old Canaanite name sometimes belonging to royalty.
 4. Some suggest that the name originally meant “Where is Father”.
 - a) Many commentators suggest that the name meant “to display enmity,” but that is disputed by later commentators.
 - (1) However, to later Israelite readers unfamiliar with its ancient form, it might have denoted one “alienated” or “discovered” from God, rather than an “adversary” or “hater” of God.
 - (2) However, Job’s experience and character are not indicative of such an intention on the part of the author.
 5. His connection with Noah and Daniel tie him with living real persons, and no great significance should be sought in his name.
- D. What kind of man was Job?
1. “and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and turned away from evil.”
 2. Job’s character was upright, pleasing to God himself. Job. 1:8; 2:3.
 - a) Literally, he was “complete and straight.”
 - b) He was devout – he feared God.
 - c) He was moral – he turned away from evil. He rejected evil; he did not merely turn away from it.
 3. Job’s character is unfolded as the book progresses.
 - a) It reaches its high point in his final speeches in Chapters 29-31, where he insists that his accomplishments are known to all (29) and denies any serious sin (31).
 - b) He was beyond reproach by man (4:3-6) or God (42:4-8).
 4. Job’s authentic righteousness is basic to the teaching of the book.
 - a) The contest between God and Satan turns on this issue.
 - (1) God affirms.

- (2) Satan denies.
 - b) Job is not said to be perfect or sinless.
 - (1) All the speakers in the book, including Job, assume that Job, as all men, is a sinner.
 - (2) As we are introduced to Job, we see him offering sacrifices for sin.
 - (3) It is possible for sinful men to have authentic righteousness.
 - 5. Job was one of a kind – there was none like him in all the earth. 1:8.
- II. And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters.
- A. Job had an ideal family of seven sons and three daughters.
 - B. Both the numbers and the sum of the numbers are signs of completeness; thus Job's family was blessed with divine favor.
- III. He was the greatest man of all the east.
- A. Affluence is the basis of the judgment based on the list of possessions; richest might be a good translation.
 - B. His wealth was measured in animals; again, the numbers indicate the ideal.
 - C. The number of oxen indicates that he was not a nomad, but a settled farmer. (This agrees with the description given in chapters 29-31.)
- IV. Job's children were able to enjoy the best of everything.
- A. The details are not as important as the general impression from the picture.
 - B. Rich and royal children could have their own residence without being married. (In Monaco the children of Prince Ranier and Princess Grace had their own homes, the only homes in all of the country.)
- V. The days of the feasting and the cycle to which reference is made is not clear. (Some suggest birthdays; others feast days or religious festivals of some kind.)
- A. The important thing is that there is no condemnation or disapproval of their activities.
 - B. There is no hint of drunkenness or licentiousness.

- C. The opposite is suggested – generally if the boys are going to engage in licentiousness, they do not invite their sisters. If they have a reputation for such, the parents generally do not let the girls go.
- D. Job is certainly aware of the possibility that they might have sinned, but while stated in the context of a description of family life, it is not limited to such. In fact, this is something that Job did continually.

1.b. The First Test (1:6-22)

1.b.1. – The First Assembly (1:6-12)

- I. **V. 6** -- Throughout the Old Testament the Lord is represented as the Creator and Ruler of the universe, which is inhabited by countless numbers of his hosts.
 - A. The hosts of heaven (*e.g.*, 1 Kings 22:19) is comprised of superhuman beings or entities. Some include stars (Job. 38:7). However, “stars” could be figurative language.
 - B. As God’s attendants, these creatures are called *angels* or *messengers*. (*e.g.*, Gen. 32:2; *cf.* Psalm 103:20) or *servants* (*e.g.*, Job 4:18).
 - C. As associates of God, they are *holy ones* (Job. 5:1).
 - D. When gathered in assembly they constitute the divine council (Psalm 82:1) or *the assembly of the holy ones* (Psalm 89:7).
 - 1. God provided over the assembly like a king on his throne; his supremacy is never questioned or in doubt.
 - a) The concept of the royal council was certainly known in the day of Job, and was ascribed to God.

- b) Other allusions to the same idea appear in Psalm 7:8; 29:9-10; 82:1; 89:7-8; 103:19; Isa. 6:1-8; 40:13-14; Job. 15:8.
2. When man is given a glimpse of God's splendor, He is seen surrounded by his *angel courtiers* (1 Kings 22:19; Is. 6:1; Gen. 28:12).
- E. Most commentators assume that the assembly is in heaven.
1. However, there is nothing in Job about where the assembly occurs.
 2. Isaiah saw the Lord in his temple, and his glory filled the earth, not heaven. (Is. 6:1-3.)
- F. Satan was *among* them.
1. Some consider this to show that he was one of their number, but it is most likely that he was an intruder an intruder.
 2. That he did not belong there is indicated by the Lord's asking him his business. This does not mean that God did not know Satan's business or purpose. Early in Scripture God asked questions to which he knew the answer (Gen. 3:9-13).
 - a) Satan does not use any of the polite language generally used by subjects in the presence of their king.
 - b) His insolence indicates a mind already in rebellion against God.
 - (1) He uses none of the language of court.
 - (2) He addressed God as "you," not as "my lord," and refers to himself as "I," not as "your servant."
 - c) The discussion shows a creature subject to God.

- (1) He is hostile, but not a rival power.
- (2) He is the chief mischief-maker; but he is a creature.
- (3) He can only do what God permits him to do.

II. **V. 7** -- The Lord inquires from whence Satan comes, and is told that he has been going to and fro on the earth, walking up and down on it.

- A. I Pet. 5:8.
- B. This does not imply ignorance on God's part any more than asking what was in Moses' hand (Exodus 4:2).
- C. The question has a dramatic function in focusing upon Satan as the significant one in this convocation and in providing a basis of the conversation between God and Satan.
- D. It gives Satan no great preeminence; in fact, Satan disappears from the book after Chapter 2.

III. **V. 8** -- The Lord asks about Job with affection and pride.

- A. The council in heaven seems to have as its one purpose to center attention upon Job, the *servant* of God.
 1. Job is God's boast.
 2. There is none like him in the earth.
 - a) This expression does not identify Job as much as it isolates him.
 - b) "None like him" is an expression generally reserved for God, only here, 2:3, and 1 Sam. 10:24 to humans. (The latter reference does not appear to be related to righteousness, but to Saul's stature, a head taller than any others.)

- B. The term *servant* can mean slave, but it is also used as a title of honor.
 - C. Only a favored few have been called *the Lord's servant*.
 - 1. It is used of Moses about 40 times.
 - 2. The prophets are often so called.
 - 3. It is used of Abraham, Isaac, and of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
 - D. Righteous men are rare.
 - 1. It may be hard to find a few (Gen. 18:22-33).
 - 2. It may be hard to find even one (Jer. 5:1).
 - 3. But it is possible, and when the Lord finds one he is pleased (Isa. 42:1).
- IV. **Vv. 9 - 10** -- Satan is cynical; such is his nature.
- A. He does not believe that anything or anybody is genuinely good (we tend to judge others by our own nature).
 - B. He is persuaded that religious people are in it only for what they can get out of it.
 - 1. Job's godliness is superficial – it has never been proved by testing.
 - 2. God has made it easy for Job to be good; he has bestowed riches upon him and built a hedge about him so that nothing can touch him.
- V. **Vv. 11** -- The basic questions of the book are asked.
- A. The character of both God and Job is questioned.
 - 1. Is God so good that He can be loved just for Himself, and not for his gifts?

2. Can a man hold on to God when there are no benefits attached?

B. Satan suggests a test to determine the answer.

1. It is a test to determine if Job's piety stems from his prosperity.
2. Some refer to this as a wager, but there is nothing in the text to suggest that that is the case. It is fairly certain that God does not gamble with the souls of His people!
3. There were no stakes, such as the soul of Job.

VI. **V. 12** -- The Lord accepts the challenge.

- A. Who can say if he accepts it to convince Satan or to defend Job against the calumny of the Devil?
- B. Satan is given permission to do as he will short of harming Job physically.
- C. Satan leaves the presence of God to do his mischief in the life of Job.

1.b.ii. – The first disasters. 1:13-19

VII. The focus is entirely upon Job, and not on the disasters themselves.

- A. The focus of the messengers is not upon the disasters so much as it is upon Job and his reaction to the messages received.
 1. Each messenger reaches Job immediately after his predecessor.
 2. Each messenger is the only survivor of the disaster reported.
 3. The uninterrupted series of messengers increases the anxiety for Job felt by the reader.

4. Job cannot react to any disaster until he reacts to them all because they are in fact one continuous disaster in concept and consequence.
- B. There is an arrangement of the disasters that emphasizes the completeness of Job's loss.
1. There is an order of disasters that alternates between the human and the natural – Sabeans, lightning, Chaldeans, whirlwind.
 2. The disasters come from all of the points of the compass.
 3. The disasters increases in severity:
 - a) oxen, asses, and servants.
 - b) sheep, goats, and servants.
 - c) camels and servants.
 - d) children.
 4. In cumulative effect, the disasters wipe out all of Job's possessions and family.
- C. In all of the disasters, neither God nor Satan is mentioned.
1. There is a continuation of the separation between the earthly and heavenly spheres of the prolog.
 2. More importantly, it is for Job to discern their source. (*See*, 1:21. It appears that the magnitude and compression of the disasters turn Job's attention to God.)
- D. With great drama, the author has brought us to Job's reaction.
1. Though the focus has been upon Job from the beginning, he has to this point not spoken one word (v. 5 may be just a thought expressed in words); there is no hint of his reaction to the crescendo of disasters.
 - a) He has nothing left of all of the family and possessions attributed to him in the opening verses.

- b) The four messengers are anonymous; his wife is kept from sight until her dramatic appearance in 2:9.
2. To this point Job had been sitting, the common method of receiving visitors.
- a) He now arises and, in common expressions of grief, rends his garment and shaves his head.
 - b) He then falls to the ground (not necessarily an act of grief, but an indication of his inner attitude of deliberate piety toward God) and worships.
 - c) There is no gashing of the body, no sackcloth and ashes, no scattering dust (an identification with the dead), no lamentation, no weeping, no fasting.
3. We are now ready for Job's reaction.
- a) If there has been a hedge around Job, his family and possessions, it has been trimmed.
 - b) If God had blessed his substance and increased it in the land, it has been removed.
 - c) God's hand has been put forth and touched all that Job had.
 - d) Will Job, as Satan predicted, curse God to his face?
 - (1) He is naked before God; his possessions are gone, his children are dead.
 - (2) Would he rage? Would he strike out at the men who plundered and murdered? Would he pronounce imprecations against nature or blaspheme its God?
4. Job's reactions:
- a) He worships. V. 20.

- (1) It is harder to praise the Lord when he is taking away than when he is giving.
- (2) Worship is the first and it seems instinctive reaction of Job to tragedy; it is second nature with him.
- (3) Such does not come naturally; it is a practiced response that grows from a lifetime of habit.
 - (a) He was not filled with joy; he was broken and cast down.
 - (b) True worship can transpire when the heart is broken and the mind is shocked by unimaginable trouble.
- (4) It arose from his relationship with God: when Adam discovered he was naked, he hid; Job worshipped.

b) He speaks. V. 21.

- (1) Job's utterance is one of Scripture's most majestic statement's of a man's complete acceptance of God's will as his greatest good and only joy. He brought nothing into the world; he will take nothing with him.
 - (a) He curses neither nature or man; he looks beyond secondary causes.
 - (b) He sees the hand of God; God gave and God took away. Everything belongs to God.
 - (i) There is no talk of Job's rights or of entitlements. One of the secrets of faith is to recognize that the believer has no earthly rights.

- (ii) God is sovereign.
- (iii) He does not speak of “his” losses or claim houses or lands or brothers or sisters or father and mother (Matt. 19:29 -- And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.); these are precisely the kinds of things that he has lost.
 - (a) For a Christian to insist on having his rights and earthly comforts is to grumble against God.
 - (b) It is to be like the Israelites in the wilderness when they murmured against God. (1 Cor. 10:10 -- Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.)
- (c) The explanation must be found, if it is to be found, in the God of his creation.
 - (i) There is no talk of good luck or bad luck, both administered by God.
 - (ii) There is no “why me” and not others.

- (iii) This kind of thinking that attempts to appease the god behind every tree or rock is nothing more than poorly disguised paganism.
- (d) Job's faith does not relieve his agony; it causes it.
 - (i) He loved his God.
 - (ii) He had the same opinion of and the same love for his God even when things went wrong.
 - (iii) Since he sees the hand of God in everything, he must at least consider the possibility that God has done something bad.
 - (a) He is thrown into doubts and questions.
 - (b) He must suffer and mature before he can understand the justice and equity of God in dealing with man in general and himself in particular.
- (2) Thus far, Job has behaved superbly. Job passed the first test. He did not sin or charge God with wrong. V. 22.
 - (a) Satan was proved a liar. John 8:44.
 - (b) There is yet no light on what God is doing with Job; it must await the end of the story.