

THE THEME OF THE BOOK OF JOB

Job appears as the 18th book in our canon of Scripture, but it was probably the very first biblical book written. Jewish tradition says its author was Moses, who heard the story of Job while he was a shepherd in the land of Midian.

The first verse tells us Job was from the land of "Uz". Dorothy journeyed to the land of Oz - Job lived in the land of Uz. The city of Uz was a little north of Edom.

1 Chronicles 1:44 lists the genealogy of the kings of Edom, and among them is a man named "Jobab". Edom bordered Midian, and it's possible that Moses had met the sons or grandsons of Job... maybe even Jobab himself.

I don't think it's an accident that Job was the first biblical book penned. Its theme is the most fundamental and foundational of all truths - the sovereignty of God. Every other doctrine of God rests on the footings of His sovereignty. This is the first concept a human needs to accept - tragically it's one truth most people never learn.

God is sovereign! He has absolute authority over all things in heaven and on earth. There is no limit to His legislation. The only rule that governs His actions is His own prerogative and will. God does whatever He likes, whenever He likes, however He likes, to whomever He likes, for whatever reason He likes.

Job lets us know upfront *who's da boss...* and it ain't us.

Modern man with his advanced knowledge and technological advancements has developed an arrogance. We think we know it all. We even try to tell God how to run His universe.

CS Lewis sums up the error of the modern mindset: "The ancient man approached God... as the accused person approaches a judge. For the modern man, the roles are reversed. He is the judge: God is in the dock (or on the stand). He is quite a kindly judge: if God should have a reasonable defence for being the god who permits war, poverty and disease, he is ready to listen to it. The trial may even end in God's acquittal. But the important thing is that Man is on the Bench and God is in the Dock."

The book of Job restores the proper roles. It puts man in the Dock, and God back on the Bench.

THE FLOW OF THE BOOK OF JOB

The book is structured in 4 sections: *prologue, dialogue, monologue, epilogue.*

The *prologue* is in chapters 1-2. It provides the story's historical *context*.

The *dialogue* in chapters 3-37 takes place between Job and his friends. It reveals the story's *conflict*.

The *monologue* in chapters 38-41 is God's rebuke of both Job and his friends. It brings *conviction*.

And the *epilogue* in chapter 42 begins with Job's *confession*, and God's subsequent restoration of His humble servant.

Context, conflict, conviction, then confession become the flow of the book.

Devotion Box - When Stress Becomes a Test

Satan challenge God in 1:10, "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!"

Satan is the world's first behaviorist. He claims Job is like Pavlov's dog. He's been conditioned to love God. The more he serves the more he gets, so why not continue serving God? Satan contends that God is nothing but a meal ticket to Job. He throws down the gauntlet, "*Nix the blessing, and you'll stop the devotion.*"

As one author observed, "People love God the way a peasant loves a cow, for the butter and cheese it produces." You don't really know if a person loves God until you take away the butter and cheese. This is what's about to happen to Job.

Verse 12, "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 loses his wealth, his property, his servants, even his children... *but not his faith.*

In verse 21, Job utters a stirring declaration of faith, "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 loves God not for what he can get, but because He's worthy. Chapter 1 closes, "In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong." Job did nothing to deserve such devastation. Job had been tested.

Guys, here's a heavy truth. The story of Job teaches us that you and I are caught up in a colossal battle. CS Lewis observed, "There is no neutral ground in the universe: every square inch, every split second, is claimed by God and counterclaimed by Satan." And they're fighting over our reactions.

Heaven is watching...how I respond to a flat tire, or how I treat a rude waitress, or how I deal with an unfair grade, or how I handle the news of a terminal illness... my reaction either brings glory to God, or bolsters Satan's blasphemies. God may've pinned His holy reputation on your reaction to the trial you're facing...

Understand, the *stress in your life* may be a *test of your faith*. Would you love God even if He withdrew His benefits?...I hope we'd all share Job's attitude.

Bible Scan - Job 1-42

THE BIG QUESTION... WHY?

In 3:26 Job says, "For the thing I greatly feared has come upon me, and what I dreaded has happened to me."

What was it Job dreaded?

Chapter 1 tells us. He offered sacrifices for his children... *just in case they sinned*. The worst possible plight for Job was to fall out of God's favor... and now that appears to be what has happened. *Why* has God turned against him? Of course, just the opposite was true. God had not turned against Job. In fact, He loved Job. The joy and pride God took in Job set off the whole ordeal in the first place. Job thought his plight meant God's displeasure, but it didn't.

When golfers hit an errant shot, and it caroms off a tree back onto the fairway, they're fond of saying, "Well, it looks like I'm living right". It's as if righteousness entitles you to favorable breaks, and unrighteousness leaves you in the rough. I wish life were that simple and straightforward, but it's not. Bad breaks befall noble people, and good fortune can come upon the wicked.

Often we grow up with a kindergarten theology, "Good thing always happen to good people, and bad things always happen to bad people." Then we get out into the real world, and realize that's just not true - that's not how life always works. Often the crook gets away with it - while the innocent person suffers injustice.

In Matthew 5:45 Jesus puts it in the positive "(God) sends rain on the just and on the unjust." The story of Job puts it in the negative - *even good people suffer*. Life isn't always fair... and we, like Job, cry out that huge 3-letter word, *why?*

Whenever I study the book of Job, I'm stunned at the realization that Job never had the opportunity to read the first two chapters of Job. All this calamity had come upon him, and he never knew *why*. And that's what sets up the rest of the book, and the dialogue between Job and his friends. How do you respond when there are no answers to the question, "Why?"

JOB THE JUST

Job 1:1, "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."

From the outset the author wants his audience to know that it was nothing Job did that caused the calamity that came upon him. Later Job's friends insist he's done some evil to merit his misery. Yet before the first slanderous salvo is fired, Job gets vindicated.

Yes, Job was a man, and like all men he sinned - but he did nothing to warrant the horrible catastrophes that come upon him. His devotion was sincere.

In chapter 2 God Himself vindicates Job. In verse 3 He says all Job's troubles are "without cause". Again in 2:10 we're told, "In all this Job did not sin with his lips."

The Holy Spirit may've inserted that last phrase just for the positive confession crowd. Some teachers claim Job's calamity was a result of a negative confession, but here we're told his distress had nothing to do with anything he did... *or said*. Nothing Job did, or didn't do, produced his plight. You might say, *Job was the best of men suffering the worst of circumstances*.

Devotion Box - A Tenacious Faith

Job makes a profession of faith in 13:15, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him."

What a powerful statement! Job's top priority is for God to be glorified in his life... and it doesn't matter if it's at his convenience, or at his expense.

Even though Job was unable to reconcile what had happened to him with what he knew of God - even though he *felt* betrayed by God - nevertheless he knows God is great, and he's determined to trust Him.

Job remains committed to a God who is *trustworthy*.

A FAULTY THEOLOGY

Job's friends try to impose on Job a *faulty theology*. They were strict adherents to the kindergarten theology held by people today. If you're faced with trouble, or sickness, or loss it means you've sinned in some way. The assumption is that suffering is God's way of punishing evil - wealth and health are His reward for righteousness.

In the minds of Job's friends their faulty assumptions left them but two options to explain his predicament: *either God is unfair, or Job has sinned*. And they're not about to say God is unfair. Instead they try to badger a confession out of Job.

But Job insists on his innocence. He's done nothing to deserve this kind of devastation. Job's honesty runs head on into his friends' deficient doctrine.

It reminds me of a Peanuts cartoon. Snoopy is standing next to his burned down doghouse. He's sobbing, "I've lost my pool table, my Van Gogh, all my keepsakes."

Lucy approaches him and says, "I can tell you why your house burned down... you sinned!" Snoopy responds with one of the best theological answers every uttered - he sounds like Job, "Pssssppppp!"

Paul Harvey spices up his radio program by splitting up his stories. He'll spin a tale before the commercial that leaves you wondering the outcome, then bait you with the promise, "We'll be back for the rest of the story." After the commercial he reveals how the perplexing story makes perfect sense.

Guys, today we're living before the commercial. The rest of the story may not be told until we get to heaven. I believe every story on earth has a happy ending in eternity, but until we get there we may have to endure some perplexity and confusion

For now, realize you're not limited to just two options. Suffering does not always mean the sufferer has sinned. God may have a purpose hidden from view.

TO THE EDGE OF BLASPHEMY

Job says in 7:11, "I will complain in the bitterness of my soul." The word "*complain*" occurs more times in Job than in any other book of the Bible. More than half the complaints in Scripture fall from the lips of Job.

In 7:20 Job vents his anger, "Have I sinned? What have I done to You, O watcher of men? Why have You set me as Your target...?" Job feels like he's being picked on. God is using him for target practice, and he doesn't know why!

In 10:1-2, Job gets defensive to a fault, "I will give free course to my complaint, I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. I will say to God, 'Do not condemn me; show me why You contend with me.'"

It's been said, "In asking *why*, Job lost his way!"

In the beginning, Job is a humble man with an exalted view of God, but as he questions God's fairness, a change takes place. In his mind, God gets smaller and smaller and Job gets larger and larger. Job loses the humility he had, and becomes haughty and proud.

Philip Yancey describes Job's speeches, "Barely able to restrain satire, he vents angry protests against God, wandering just to the edge of blasphemy." Job's pain poisons his piety. Over the course of the dialogue Job cops an attitude toward God. He loves God. He trusts God, but in demanding an explanation he forgets that God is God. God is sovereign. He does what He wills, and owes no one an explanation.

Chapter 19:5-6 is another example where Job wanders close to the edge of blasphemy, "If indeed you exalt yourselves against me, and plead my disgrace against me, know then that God has wronged me..."

Remember, based on the restricted theology of his 3 friends there were only two possible explanations: either Job sinned, or God was unfaithful. And Job is so certain of his innocence, given only those two scenarios, he accuses God of wrong. He's so caught up trying to vindicate himself he plays loose with his reverence for God.

A *humble man* becomes a *hurting man* who becomes a *haughty man*. An explanation from God has become more important to Job than God.

In 27:5-6 Job again wanders close to the edge of blasphemy. "Far be it from me that I should say you are right; till I die I will not put away my integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go..."

Job is saying, if it means that God is wrong for him to be right... so be it. What's happened to Job's reverence for God? Where is the fear of God? Job has become arrogant.

Everybody talks about "*the patience of Job*", but what about the patience of God. Job's arrogance pushes God's patience.

OUR FATHER FILTER

Job 1:9 tells us, "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?"

Satan couldn't breach this hedge without God's permission. I believe there's a holy hedge around all of God's kids. Notice, Satan can't harm a single hair on Job's head... or on your head, without first obtaining God's permission.

What a comfort! God is sovereign even over Satan. You and I are surrounded by a Father-filter. Nothing can get through to you that doesn't come attached with God's permission and purpose.

SONGS IN THE NIGHT

In chapters 32-37 a young man named "Elihu" speaks to Job. 34:37 sums up Elihu's discourse, "For he adds rebellion to his sin; he claps his hands among us, and multiplies his words against God."

Elihu assumes Job has sinned. He's also trapped in a faulty theology. But he addresses what's happened to Job's attitude since his calamity. Job lost the proper perspective. God doesn't owe him an explanation. God does not respond to our demands, nor is He obliged to speak on cue. He does as He chooses...

Elihu vindicates God's character. In verse 24... God does deliver. In verse 28... God redeems. Verse 30... God brings back the soul from the pit. In 34:9... it does profit to serve God. Verse 12, God is never unjust. The accusations Job hurled at God were just as false as the accusations his friends hurled at him.

Notice what Elihu says of God in Job 35:10, "Who gives songs in the night..." God does comfort the distressed. He brings joy and peace in times of darkness. But Job resents the darkness.

God chose to keep Job in the dark as to the why of his situation, but Job pushed the issue. He demanded an answer, and it was his arrogance that blocked the comfort of God.

The Spirit of God would've come upon Job, and lifted his spirit. He would've enabled Job to sing even though he couldn't see... *if* Job had been willing to trust the Lord even in the dark.

Here's a quote to remember, "Where God puts a period, never change it to a question mark." Real faith *trusts the Lord* even where it cannot *trace Him*. God will lift our spirit if we humble our hearts... He promises to give us songs in the night.

In the end God will rebuke Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar - Job's first three counselors. They were instruments of Satan to torment Job. But Elihu escapes rebuke. Though he shared the same simplistic theology of the other three men he was used by God to help Job get his eyes off himself and back on God.

Job ends chapter 37 with a majestic picture of God's sovereignty over nature - particularly the weather. He talks about clouds, and rain, and thunder, and lightning, and wind... and all the while there's a storm brewing in the distance getting closer and closer. Elihu has been used by God to prepare Job for what happens next...

Devotion Box - Eye-wear

Job says in 31:1, "I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I look upon a young woman?" Job is a model for every man.

Guys, have you made a covenant with your eyes not to look on a girl in a lustful way?

If you never *look* you'll never *lust*. Job cut sin off at the source. If you're serious about purity and walking in holiness, you'll make the same covenant. It's some cool eye-wear!

If you have questions on tonight's study, email Pastor Sandy - sandyadams@calvarychapel.org

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Next Bible Scan - August 13 - Psalm 1 - 41

"Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him..." - Job 13:15

Bible Scan Memory Verse

JOB'S ATTITUDE ADJUSTMENT

Job 38:1-2 tells us, "Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said: "Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge?" God appears to answer Job's questions, but in a way we'd never expect. God appears to Job with a few questions of his own...

He puts Job in the hot seat. Verse 3, "Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me." In other words, "*pull up your bootstraps.*" It's time for an attitude adjustment. Let's remember who's God.

Job thinks he knows what God can and can't do. Let's see how much he really knows. In the next 3 chapters a haughty Job gets taken down a few notches. God asks Job 70 questions that prove impossible for him to answer...

God sums up his first barrage of questions in 40:2, "Shall the one who contends with the Almighty correct Him? He who rebukes God, let him answer it." *What about it Job? How about some answers?* But Job was speechless.

While Job questioned God - he grew larger and larger in his estimation, and God grew smaller and smaller - but in the face of God's questions it's now Job who's shrinking in significance, and God who is growing more and more important. Proper proportion is returning to Job's perspective.

But Job's attitude is still not where God wants it. Job's answer in 40:4-5 is less than God desires. He replies, "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."

It's almost a pout. Job gives in and accepts God's sovereignty, but only because he has no other choice. Job refuses to embrace God's sovereignty, and worship the God who does whatever He pleases.

That's why God starts a new round of questions in chap-

ter 40, and immediately challenges Job to try his hand at executing justice. Job has accused an infinite God of being unjust and unfair. Can a finite Job do any better?

What if Job were plunged into the perplexities of life, and it were up to him to mete out what was right? How would you do if you were God for a day? Job criticized God for 28 chapters, but "God" is a job he really doesn't want.

Finally, Job repents. He's been humbled by the wisdom and power of God revealed in nature. Author Don Baker writes, "If there is anything a sufferer needs, it is not an explanation, but a fresh, new look at God."

In 42:2-6 Job confesses, "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. Listen, please, and let me speak; You said, 'I will question you, and you shall answer Me.' I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Job yields to the sovereignty of God. Reverence has been restored.

It's interesting, Job never did learn why all the calamity had come upon him, but he learned about God. And when you know "*who*" you don't need to know "*why*". One letter makes all the difference. We need to change our "y" to "o".

Tradition tells us Job lived 210 years, and God doubled all he had lost. He died with many treasures, but the greatest by far was the knowledge of God he had gained.

In the ash heap Job's attitude had been altered forever. He had learned life's first and most important lesson... *there is a God, and He's not me.*

DEVOTION BOX - THE BLOCKER

Job 42:10, "the LORD restored Job's losses when he prayed for his friends..." But when did it happen? When he gave up his bitterness, and prayed for his friends.

Bitterness is a blocker. It stymies God's blessings. Guys, if we're nurturing any resentments, or bitterness toward a brother, we need to uproot it tonight.

DEVOTION BOX - A BOOK YOU CAN TRUST

3000 years before Columbus discovered the New World, Job said of God (26:10), "He drew a circular horizon on the face of the waters, at the boundary of light and darkness."

For centuries, while most scientists thought the world was flat, the Bible portrayed the earth as a circle. Here's another proof of the supernatural origin of the Bible.