

Suffering and the Response of a Godly Man

1. Study Job 1:1-22. Who is Job?

- a. Job was “blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil.”

The Bible begins its description of Job emphasizing his character and actions. Job’s right relationship with God motivated him to turn away from evil. For example, by offering a burnt offering on behalf of his children, Job played an intercessory role in sanctifying his family, concerned that they receive forgiveness for any sin committed knowingly or unknowingly. He would also intercede for his friends in the end (Job 42:10). It is worthwhile to note that wealth did not provide Job the security to live in sin.

- b. Job had “seven sons and three daughters.”

Having many children was common in the Ancient Near East; however, the number seven was a biblical number of completeness and was seen as a sign of God’s blessing.

- c. Job had “7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 female donkeys, and very many servants” and “was the greatest of all the men of the east.”

Job’s large livestock required a lot of land and servants to manage; hence, Job was very wealthy. Job’s wealth, integrity and wisdom entitled him his title of renown, which was later attested: highly respected (Job 29:7-11), fair and honest judge (Job 29:7, 12-17), wise counselor (Job 29:21-24), honest employer (Job 31:13-15, 38-39) and hospitable and generous (Job 31:16-21, 32).

2. What are your observations of the discussion that took place between God and Satan (Job 1:6-12)?

Despite being thrown down from heaven, Satan still had access to heavenly realm. Still subject to God, Satan cannot ignore Him and must answer when he is addressed. And while he does not lie to God, Satan is still irreverent and does not address God with reverence like others in the heavenly presence of God (see the book of Revelation).

It is interesting to note that it is God who brings up Job’s name to Satan’s attention and who speaks of Job by the honorable title of “My servant.” Was God making the point that despite Satan’s dominion over earth, Satan did not have the worship of Job?

Unable to deny God’s assessment of Job’s godliness, Satan attacks Job’s motives for piety. Job does not worship God out of love, but only because of what he got from God in return! Satan believes that once Job’s blessings are removed, God will lose Job’s worship.

Satan’s perspective reflects his own personal motives for existence. Satan implies that the motives of a godly man are that of natural and selfish human nature; the cause of the Christian’s life is not acknowledged. Will Christians serve God if there isn’t any personal gain? Do Christians worship, because it is the means for wealth, protection and reward? Satan certainly seems to think so and appeals to human nature in his temptations (Gen 3:1-6; Matt 4:3-9).

In the course of accusing Job, Satan also questions God’s integrity by implying that God can only get worship when there is the promise of wealth and protection.

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3. What do you observe about God's hand in Job's test? What do you observe about Job's reaction to his plight?

By allowing Satan to test Job, God demonstrates his sovereign right to do whatever He desires with His creation. Just as He can bless and bestow man with children, health and wealth, he can also initiate and plan suffering.

Job mourns deeply the loss of his children, but his faith causes him to see God's sovereign hand in his affliction. He does not become bitter, and he continues to worship and praise the Lord even at this moment of extreme grief. "Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God (Job 1:22).

In his first test, Job demonstrated that Satan's prediction was wrong. Mankind can be godly without any return of wealth. With Job, despite his loss of his wealth and family, reverent devotion was not something that was bought, but instead, in recognition of God's grace.

Job is classified as a Wisdom Book along with Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon, because it deals with the universal questions that man has about life, in this case, why do the righteous suffer. Exemplifying a common literary structure of Ancient Near East writings, Job can be divided into three sections: the prologue (Job 1-2), the body (Job 3-41), and the epilogue (Job 42). The conversations between the characters of Job is in the literary genre of poetry, which requires careful reading to understand their imagery and meaning. But in dramatic fashion, the narrative in the epilogue reveals what happens to Job and delivers the message that God wanted man to know.

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