

Job

[Part 1]

The purpose of the Book of Job is to demonstrate God's sovereignty and the meaning of true faith.

The question of "Why do the righteous suffer?" is also addressed.

The need for a firm foundation in life is also shown, for the quality of our lives is determined by the quality of our foundations.

Job was tested. With a life that was filled with prestige, possessions and people, suddenly assaulted on every side, devastated, stripped down to his foundations.

But his life endured because it was built on the Eternal God.

Job is a book that tells the story of riches-to-rages-to-riches, a treatise about suffering and divine sovereignty and a picture of faith that endures.

As we study the story of Job's experiences we need to analyse our own lives and what foundation we have.

Job 1:1-3 [New King James] *"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 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."*

The location of the land of Uz is uncertain, we only know that it had plentiful crops and pastures [verse 3] and located near to the desert, [Job 1:19] and was close enough to the Sabaeans and Chaldeans to be raided, [Job 1:14-17]. Uz is also mentioned in **Jeremiah 25:19-20**.

Most scholars believe Uz was located east of the Jordan river near Canaan where the Jews lived, and that Job knew about God because of God's people.

Job 1:4-5 [New King James] *"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. 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 probably lived during the days of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, before God gave the Law to Moses or appointed priests to be religious leaders. So during Job's day, the father of the family was the family's religious leader.

This indicates that Job did **not** consider himself sinless. Job did this out of his love for God, **not** just because of his role as head of the house.

Job 1:6-12 [New King James] *"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!’ 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.”

Because God is the Creator of all angels, both those who serve Him and those who have rebelled, He still has complete power and authority over them.

Satan, originally an angel serving God, became corrupt through his own pride, [Ezekiel 28:14-17] and sinned, [1 John 3:8].

Satan tries to hinder God’s work with people, but is limited by God’s power and can only do what he is permitted to do, [Luke 22:31-32; 1 Timothy 1:19-20; 2 Timothy 2:23-26].

Satan is called the enemy of God because he actively looks for people to attack with temptation, [1 Peter 5:8-9] and because he wants people to hate God. Satan does this through lies and deception, [Genesis 3:1-6; John 8:44].

Job who had been blessed by God was a perfect target for Satan.

Any person who is committed to God should expect Satan’s attacks for he hates God’s people as much as he hates God.

Satan accurately analysed why many people trust God, not out of love, but because God had blessed them so much physically, as God had Job.

Many people are “fair-weather” Christians, following God only when everything is going well, adversity destroys their faith.

But for true believers like Job, we see that adversity actually strengthens their faith, causing them to have deeper faith in God in order to withstand the storms of trials in life.

The conversation that Satan had with God, [verse 12] teaches us an important fact about God. He is fully aware of every attempt by Satan to bring suffering and difficulties upon us.

While God may allow us to suffer for a reason beyond our understanding, He is always aware of what is happening and most likely using such circumstances to mature us spiritually, [Hebrews 12:5-10].

Job 1:13-19 [New King James] *“Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house; and a messenger came to Job and said, ‘The oxen were ploughing and the donkeys feeding beside them, when the Sabeans raided them and took them away, indeed they have killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you!’ While he was still speaking, another also came and said, ‘The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them; and I alone have escaped to tell you!’ While he was still speaking, another also came and said, ‘The Chaldeans formed three bands, raided the camels and took them away, yes, and killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you!’ While he was still speaking, another also came and said, ‘Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house, and suddenly a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people, and they are dead; and I alone have escaped to tell you!’”*

Satan’s attack on Job was fast and total, all his physical possessions and most of his family, [verse 9] were lost. **Job did not hide his overwhelming grief. His emotions showed that he was human and loved his family.**

Job 1:20-22 [New King James] *“Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. And he said: ‘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.’ In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.”

Job’s reaction towards the Creator God was the acknowledging God’s sovereign authority over everything God had given him, including life itself.

This was the response of a person who had total faith in their Creator.

Satan had misjudged Job’s trusting relationship with the Creator God. Job had won this “*first round.*”

Job had proved that people can love God for who and what He is, not just for how He chooses to bless them physically.

Job 2:1-6 [New King James] *“Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD. And the LORD said to Satan, ‘From where do you come?’ 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? And still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause.’ So Satan answered the LORD and said, ‘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.’”*

This was **not** Satan changing God’s mind, but God was willing to go along with Satan’s plan because He knew the eventual outcome of Job’s story, knowing the faith that Job had in Him.

Job’s suffering was a test for Job but also a great example for all who put their trust in the Creator God.

Job 2:7-10 [New King James] *“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 potsherd with which to scrape himself while he sat in the midst of the ashes. Then his wife said to him, ‘Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!’ But he said to her, ‘You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?’ In all this Job did not sin with his lips.”*

Again we see that God put a limit on what Satan could do, inflict pain that was just short of death. Added to the physical pain was mental pain inflicted by Satan through Job’s wife, which was far from that of a loving and comforting partner.

The message from the life of Job is that we should **not** “*give up*” on God because He allows us to have painful experiences in life.

If we always knew why we were suffering, our faith would have no room to grow.

Job 2:11-13 [New King James] *“Now when Job’s three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, each one came from his own place, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. For they had made an appointment together to come and mourn with him, and to comfort him. And when they raised their eyes from afar, and did not recognise him, they lifted their voices and wept; and each one tore his robe and sprinkled dust on his head toward heaven. So they sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his grief was very great.”*

Job’s friends have **not** always received the credit due to them. **In fairness to these men they let us remember that we find that many people are only “*fair-weather*” friends who mysteriously disappear. These men who had rejoiced with Job were also ready to weep with him. The sight**

of Job's disfigured body filled them with profound anguish. The seven days of silent sympathy with the suffering Job, was clear evidence of the sterling worth of their friendship.

The ministry of silence helped Job much more than the ministry of words, [Job 13:5]. Job's friends realised that his pain was too deep to be healed with mere words. Too often we feel we must say something spiritual and insightful to a hurting friend, when what they really need is just our presence, showing that we care through empathetic silence and loving companionship.

Job 3:1-26 [New King James] *“After this Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth. And Job spoke, and said: ‘May the day perish on which I was born, and the night in which it was said, “A male child is conceived.” May that day be darkness; may God above not seek it, nor the light shine upon it. May darkness and the shadow of death claim it; may a cloud settle on it; may the blackness of the day terrify it. As for that night, may darkness seize it; may it not rejoice among the days of the year, may it not come into the number of the months. Oh, may that night be barren! May no joyful shout come into it! May those curse it who curse the day, those who are ready to arouse Leviathan. May the stars of its morning be dark; may it look for light, but have none, and not see the dawning of the day; because it did not shut up the doors of my mother’s womb, nor hide sorrow from my eyes. Why did I not die at birth? Why did I not perish when I came from the womb? Why did the knees receive me? Or why the breasts, that I should nurse? For now I would have lain still and been quiet, I would have been asleep; then I would have been at rest with kings and counsellors of the earth, who built ruins for themselves, or with princes who had gold, who filled their houses with silver; or why was I not hidden like a stillborn child, like infants who never saw light? There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest. There the prisoners rest together; they do not hear the voice of the oppressor. The small and great are there, and the servant is free from his master. Why is light given to him who is in misery, and life to the bitter of soul, who long for death, but it does not come, and search for it more than hidden treasures; who rejoice exceedingly, and are glad when they can find the grave? Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, and whom God has hedged in? For my sighing comes before I eat, and my groanings pour out like water. For the thing I greatly feared has come upon me, and what I dreaded has happened to me. I am not at ease, nor am I quiet; I have no rest, for trouble comes.’”*

These are the cry of a man in anguish who is quivering with agony. In this and other speeches of Job we must **not** submit every statement to microscopic examination, assuming that every word has been thoroughly weighed before utterance and an exact expression of Job's deepest thoughts.

Job was struggling emotionally, physically and spiritually, his misery was pervasive and deep.

We should never underestimate how vulnerable we are during times of suffering and pain.

We must hold on to our faith in the Creator God, even if there is no relief.

Job's grief was so great that we cannot blame him of considering one way out; death.

Job did **not** look on death with terror, as something to be shunned at all cost but a prize to be sought with the avidity of a man digging for treasure, [verses 20-22]. **This shows the great trust that Job had in the Creator God, that is expressed very clearly in the statement he made as recorded later.**

Job 19:25-27 [New King James] *“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!”*

This was the foundation statement of Job's life.

Job's grief and pain placed him at the crossroads of his faith, shattering many **misconceptions** about the Creator God, all of which we can learn from.

Obedience to God will bring you riches, will keep us out of trouble and pain and protect our loved ones. This is a misconception.

Job was driven back to the basics of his faith having only two choices, he could do as his wife suggested, curse God and give up, or he could trust God and draw strength from Him to continue.

Other lessons we can learn from the records life of Job are –

Knowing God through a close relationship is better than knowing the answers to all that happens to us in life.

Pain is **not** always a punishment.

God is **not** a despot or uncaring.

Job was beginning to lose his perspective in life, he had been careful not to worship things but only God, and was now overwhelmed by the calamities that mocked his caution.

Job, as we all have to learn, life is not given to us merely for happiness and personal fulfilment, but for us to serve our Creator God and bring honour to Him.

The worth of our life is **not** based on how we feel, but on one reality that nothing and no-one can take from us, God's love for us.

Romans 8:37-39 [New King James] *“Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

These verses contain one of the most comforting promises in all scripture. God is telling us through Paul how great His love for us is, so that we can feel totally secure in Him, for no power in the universe is greater than Him, for He is their creator and sustainer. Even Satan and the demons whom the Creator God is partly using to fulfil the ultimate end of His plan for humanity.

Job must have had certain knowledge of God's plan for humanity otherwise he could not have made the statement that he did, [Job 19:25-27].

Job 4:1-2 [New King James] *“Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said: ‘If one attempts a word with you, will you become weary? But who can withhold himself from speaking?’”*

Job had broken the silence so now Eliphaz can venture to offer words of help and healing along with a warning, hoping it will not offend his friend.

Eliphaz claimed to have been given secret knowledge through a special revelation from God, [**verses 12-16**] and that he had learnt much from personal experience, [**verse 8**].

Eliphaz argued that suffering is a direct result of sin, so if Job would only confess his sins his suffering would end, [**Job 5:8, 18**] Job's response was to take back his false accusations, [**Job 6:29**].

Part of what Eliphaz said is true and part is false. It is true that those who promote sin and trouble eventually will be punished, but it is false that those who are good and innocent will never suffer.

All the material recorded in the Word of God is there for God's choice. Some is a record of what people said and did, but is **not** an example to follow.

1 Corinthians 10:6, 11 [New King James] *“Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.” ... “Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.”*

Many human decisions are recorded as examples we should avoid, not make the same mistakes that they did.

Eliphaz’s comments are an example of what we should not do, we should avoid making false assumptions about others based only on our own experience for only the Creator God knows all the motivations and truth, [Psalms 139:1-16].

Job 42:7 [New King James] *“And so it was, after the LORD had spoken these words to Job, that the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, ‘My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has.’”*

God’s response to what Eliphaz and his two friends said was **not** true about Job, but did **not** rebuke Elihu for what he said. We will understand why when we come to study his speech.

Job 4:3-4 [New King James] *“Surely you have instructed many, and you have strengthened weak hands. Your words have upheld him who was stumbling, and you have strengthened the feeble knees;”*

Eliphaz admits the good that Job had done for other people.

Eliphaz then presents misguided advice, that a good person’s hope is in what righteous things they have done, [verses 5-6].

Job 4:7-11 [New King James] *“Remember now, who ever perished being innocent? Or where were the upright ever cut off? Even as I have seen, those who plough iniquity and sow trouble reap the same. By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of His anger they are consumed. The roaring of the lion, the voice of the fierce lion, and the teeth of the young lions are broken. The old lion perishes for lack of prey, and the cubs of the lioness are scattered.”*

Here we have truth mingled with error, which is one way in which Satan deceives people, [2 Corinthians 11:14-15].

Job 4:12-17 [New King James] *“Now a word was secretly brought to me, and my ear received a whisper of it. In disquieting thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falls on men, fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones shake. Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair on my body stood up. It stood still, but I could not discern its appearance. A form was before my eyes; there was silence; then I heard a voice saying: ‘Can a mortal be more righteous than God? Can a man be more pure than his Maker?’”*

Although Eliphaz claims that his vision came from the Creator God it is very unlikely, because Eliphaz misrepresented God, [Job 42:7] and the vision is summarised in verse 17 which is true but Eliphaz’s conclusions, [Job 5:8] reveals a very shallow understanding of Job and his suffering.

We have examples here of how easy it is for teachers, counsellors and well-meaning friends can begin with a portion of God’s Truth but then go off on a tangent by limiting God to our perspective and finite understanding of life.

Job 4:18 [New King James] *“If He puts no trust in His servants, if He charges His angels with error,”*

Do God’s angels really make errors? **Remember it is Eliphaz who is speaking not God, so be careful about building our knowledge of the spiritual world from Eliphaz’s personal opinions.** In addition the Hebrew word translated “error” used only here in scripture, “*meshûwgâh*” means mistake or unclear.

When complete trustworthiness and service without error cannot be claimed by God's heavenly servants, [example Satan and his demons]. How dare any human with their fleeting life and limited quest for wisdom have any right to claim to be more righteous and pure than their Maker.

Eliphaz was right about God's greatness, but he did not understand God's greater purposes concerning suffering.

Job 4:19-21 [New King James] *“How much more those who dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, who are crushed before a moth? They are broken in pieces from morning till evening; they perish forever, with no one regarding. Does not their own excellence go away? They die, even without wisdom.”*

These statements about the frailty of human beings are good to remember if we find ourselves judging what the Creator God is doing in our personal lives.

Our physical bodies are composed of the same elements as the dirt under our feet.

Our lives are so often in the dark they are like a moth that is easy prey to the bat who has special unseen abilities. Could this be referring to how easy we can fall prey to Satan and his unseen deceptions?

If just one peg of a tent is taken away then the whole tent will collapse, just like our life is dependent on all parts functioning in harmony.