

OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

This week, we'll take a quick look at the book of Job. Job is a difficult book for us to completely comprehend, and yet it is an important book, and it is one which God has intentionally included in His Holy Word. As difficult as it may be to understand, it does shed light on God as the sovereign creator of all. It also helps us to know that even when we don't understand what is happening to us or around us, or to someone we love, God does. We see that during these times, it is our faith in Him that gets us through. Job-like times try us, temper us, and lead us toward becoming the person Christ wants us to be.

Job is the Old Testament example of exactly what the Apostle James wrote about in James Chapter 1:2-4: "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

For our study this week then, let's take a quick look at the suffering of a good man and his dialogue with his friends and with God.

1. The story of Job probably occurred before the time of Abraham. For example, we can tell from reading the text that no mention of the Law or the Exodus exists, or is referenced anywhere in the book. Read the verses below and indicate why they indicate that the story happened before Abraham?
 - a. Job 1:3 and 42:12
 - i. ANSWER: Job is described as a simply a wealthy nomad, not as a Jew, nor from a particular tribe in Israel.
 - b. Job 1:5 and 42:8
 - i. ANSWER: In these passages, it is described that Job himself is offering sacrifices, not the Priests. It is clear that the priestly order and the Law have not yet been given, or established.
2. What do the verses below from other parts of the Bible tell us about the man called Job?
 - a. Ezekiel 14:14
 - i. ANSWER: Job is referred to as one of the great men of faith.
 - b. James 5:10-11
 - i. ANSWER: James cites Job as an example of a man who endured during difficult times of trial.
3. The book of Job addresses many issues and questions that we face today, just as Job faced then. What are at least two basic questions of issues confronting Job that are addressed in the book?
 - a. ANSWER 1: What is the cause and effect of suffering? I.e., why does it happen? Is it always because of sin or unrighteousness?
 - b. ANSWER 2: It brings into question God's justice and His sovereign care over His creation.
4. Read Job Chapters 1 and 2 and summarize the dialogues between God and Satan.
 - a. ANSWER 1: God challenges Satan to consider how there is no one other like Job on the earth; and Satan replies that of course Job worships God, because God protects him and all that he does. In essence, the only reason that he loves God is because of all God does for him. Similarly, Satan is telling God that the only reason we love God is because of all the things God does for us.
 - b. ANSWER 2: When God again asks if Satan has considered his servant Job, we see that Job has lost all of his physical possessions, and that even after losing these possessions, he is still faithful and continues to worship God. Satan again replies and says "A man will give all he has for his own life. But stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face."

5. Describe Job's spiritual character as presented in Job Chapter 1.

- a. ANSWER: Even after God allows Satan to afflict Job physically, Job continues to be faithful and to worship God. Later, when his "friends" come to advise him and his wife tells him to "curse God and die", Job continues to be strong in his faith and dependence on God, and he continues to worship God. We can see from all this that Job was a man of great faith who recognized that all that he had, and ever would, have belonged to God; and that God had a plan for his life, even if he didn't totally know or understand that plan.

6. Summarize the speeches of Eliphaz the Temanite.

- a. ANSWER: In essence Eliphaz tells Job that there is sin in Job's life and Job is unwilling to admit it and deal with it. Eliphaz knows this because "a spirit" spoke to him and told him that Job despised God, and now God is disciplining Job because of this sin.

7. Summarize the speeches of Bildad the Shuhite.

- a. ANSWER: Bildad's main claim is that Job is nothing more than a "big wind", or in our language today, "full of hot air". He believes that Job must be wicked; otherwise why would God be treating Job this way?

8. Summarize the speeches of Zophar the Naamathite.

- a. ANSWER: Zophar tells Job that he is so busy talking that he never lets anyone else get a word in. This condition has led Job to never have a heart that is prepared to deal with sin and that God is punishing Job for not having prepared his heart properly.

9. Summarize the speeches of Elihu.

- a. ANSWER: In summary, Elihu was upset by Job's righteous attitude. It bothered him tremendously that Job would not admit to some great sin or the error of his ways; which was, in Elihu's mind, obviously causing all this trouble in Job's life. It further angered Elihu that, being younger than the three friends of Job, he could see that Job must be wrong; but yet these three older people who were friends of Job could not see this. He then lashes out against both Job and his friends and, in effect, speaks from the "wisdom of his youth" calling a spade a spade, justified in his own mind that he knows the truth and that Job and the others are just too blind to see it.

10. The dialogue of Job's three friends sends him into a great depression, full of despair and is ready to die. He pleads with his friends to stop giving him advice, and what else does he tell them? (see Job 19:25)

- a. ANSWER: He tells them that no matter what may happen to him, he knows that God is his redeemer and that God's will will be done. Even in Job's deepest moments of despair he knows God is God and that God is his redeemer.

11. Now summarize God's response. How is Jeremiah 33:3 relevant to this?

- a. ANSWER 1: First, God says: Job, get a grip on yourself. Stop being such a complainer; open your heart and your eyes and gain some wisdom from all that is happening.
- b. ANSWER 2: Second, God asks: Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Here, let me explain things you do not know nor can you comprehend.
- c. ANSWER 3: In Chapter 39, God points out that His creation was intended to serve man, but that man cannot control it. Only through God's control of the universe that He created will creation be able to serve man.
- d. ANSWER 4: Finally, in the closing chapters, God asks Job if he is trying to reshape God into Job's own liking? This is because Job was trying to fit his understanding of God into man's way of thinking, not God's.

Job became a man humbled by his knowledge and experience with God. Having suffered through unimaginable trials, Job came to see and understand God in a completely different light. He came to recognize God as sovereign in all of creation, including his own life. Job also came to realize that God's plan for His creation reaches far beyond our understanding and that, in the final analysis, we must take many steps in life by faith alone.

Just as with Job, in our darkest hour, when all appears lost, God remains faithful and will be with us through all of it. How glorious our hope in Christ that no matter what may befall us in this life, we have an eternity with Him as our blessed hope and promise.

Have a great weekend everyone.

In Christ,

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