



Job: God in Our Pain

Memory Verse: Job 19:25-26, 27 "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh shall I see God....How my heart yearns within me."

Background

The book of Job is the 18th book of the Bible and the first book of poetry (also known as the wisdom books) in the Old Testament. The name of the book could mean "persecuted one" from the Hebrew or from the Arabic word meaning "to come back" or "repent" which would define the title as "repentant one." Both meanings fit the book of Job well. Many people (including Moses, Job, Solomon, Ezra, Isaiah, etc.) have been suggested by scholars as the author of Job. However, the author and the time in which Job was written remains unknown.

The events in the book of Job are believed to have taken place around 2,000 BC during the time of the patriarchs such as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This conclusion comes from several details mentioned in Job. First, Job's lifespan was close to 200 years, and his wealth was measured in terms of livestock rather than gold or silver. Job was the priest of his family offering sacrifices to God whom he calls *Shaddai* ("the Almighty") much like the other patriarchs. Finally, there is no reference to Israel, the Exodus, or Mosaic Law. The book of Job takes place in the land of Uz in the area of Edom which is believed to have been in northern Arabia.

The Short Story

Job learns to trust God's sovereignty through his many trials and sufferings. But it is a rocky path of trust, and the story exposes the profound ignorance of both Job and his friends. The dangers of popular theology, superficial judgments and the illusion of control are all revealed. The Lord redeems it all.

What's the Big Idea?

Job was a very wealthy man, well-known for his integrity and piety throughout the land. The book of Job begins with Satan approaching God, claiming that nobody loves God from a pure heart, only for material blessings. Faced with a profound attack on his character, and the authenticity of man's faith, God allows a single test to prove the genuine capacity of man to trust in him. It is clearly understood to be an exception to the rule. Yet, God allows Satan to strike Job in a series of assaults. Suddenly, Job loses everything: his children, wealth, status, and health. Sorrowfully, Job bemoans the day of his birth, but through it all he refuses to deny or curse God. Nevertheless, Job wrestles with the reasons behind what has happened to him and challenges God with the question of "Why?". Several friends come to Job's aid as they mourn with him and debate the answer to this question. Their human wisdom in trying to explain Job's suffering gets them nowhere, and finally, God intervenes and speaks to Job. God never answers Job's "why" question. Instead, God reveals His power, wisdom, majesty, and sovereignty over all of creation. Overwhelmed, Job recognizes the sovereignty of God, humbles himself, and repents. The Lord is gracious and restores to Job twice as much as he had before.

So What? Why is this book so important? What was God's purpose for the book?

Job challenges God with the question that often troubles human hearts: "Why does God allow bad things to happen to the righteous?". The main focus of the book of Job is not the answer to this question. Rather, what is shown to be important is: a) what Job learns in his suffering and b) the profound ignorance of he and his friends to the real events that are driving story (set up in chapters 1 and 2). Job learns that God is powerful and loving. In choosing to love, he has chosen NOT to control all things. For love requires choice. Made in his image, people also are free to choose. People choose whether to love, whether to trust and what to do with their questions. As the ultimate "lover", he chooses to pay the ultimate price to redeem them. His love gives people the freedom to interact with one another, interpret life, respond to its circumstances, and even blame God. Yet, he remains the ultimate hero, healer and protector. Job learned to trust God in his suffering. Pain and suffering are inevitable in this life. Sometimes, like Job, we may never learn the reasons behind our suffering this side of heaven. Nevertheless, we can learn to trust God in our suffering and rely on His strength and power to help us through it. God is not immune nor is He ignorant to our pain. The Almighty God knows and cares about every moment of our lives. He identifies with us in our suffering (Hebrews 4:15) having sent His only Son, the most righteous man to ever walk on earth, to suffer greatly so that we might have eternal life. In our painful circumstances, may we draw close to God, trusting Him, and focusing on His character and experience the truth given in James 1:12, "*Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.*"

Teaching Texts

Job 42:5-6 “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes see You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

Job 19:25-26 “For I know that redeemer lives.”

Sermon-Based Discussion Questions

- The story of Job is set up as epic poetry. As such, the story teller and audience are aware of some things that the characters are not. Is it possible that much of life involves things we do not see?
- If that is true, is it not equally possible that we misinterpret our circumstances at times, and place blame inappropriately?
- Is it possible that we are part of a larger story; that what we see is only a part of what is actually occurring in our lives?
- Is it possible that there is a war for our affection and our hearts?

Practical Application

- In John 3:8, we learn that Jesus came to destroy the works of the enemy. We understand that this process is still underway. In what ways have you played the role of Job or his friends?
- Have you blamed people or God for suffering that neither you nor they really understood?
- Has confusion over evil caused you to misplaced the blame at times? Has it caused doubt, fear or breach of trust? The words of Job in 42:5-6 (and Job 19:25-26) provide a great place to begin your recovery today.

Hitting the Highpoints

- Job 1:8 “Have you noticed my servant Job?...He fears God and stays away from evil.”
- Job 9:33 “If only there were a mediator....someone who could bring us together.”
- Job 37:1 “My heart pounds as I think of this. It trembles within me.”
- Job 41:11 “Who has given me anything that I need to pay back?”
- Job 42:6 “I take back everything I said, and I sit in dust and ashes...”

Bonus Features

Where is Jesus in Job? In Job 9:33 Job cries out, “If only there were a mediator between us, someone who could bring us together.” This is the continued cry and need for everyone to this very day. In 1 Timothy 2:5+6 Paul reminds us of the Good News, “For there is only one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and humanity—the man Christ Jesus. He gave his life to purchase freedom for everyone. This is the message God gave to the world at just the right time.” This is our joy, the basis of our hope, and the message we proclaim.

Personal Takeaways and Notes