

God Gives Job (and Us) a Bigger Picture

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The Book of Job

The Book of Job presents us with the story of Job, a man who lived during King Solomon's day, most likely. Job is a Biblical, historical account of a portion of Job's life (Ezek. 14:14, James 5:11). Job wrestles with the human problem of evil and suffering. Ultimately, God is responsible for all suffering by permitting Satan some freedom to roam this earth for a time. In the end, Job finds he cannot understand God completely, but can trust Him fully.

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.¹² And when they raised their eyes from afar, and did not recognize him, they lifted their voices and wept; and each one tore his robe and sprinkled dust on his head toward heaven.¹³ 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 2:11-13

Then Job answered the LORD and said:² "I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You.³ 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.⁴ Listen, please, and let me speak; You said, 'I will question you, and you shall answer Me.'⁵ "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You.⁶ Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

Job 42:1-6

REALIZE you only know a little bit.

You might read Chapters One and Two and think, "What else does this man have to learn?" Job indeed is a righteous man and he was doing everything right. There's nothing God judges about Job until Job demands his day in court. There was a lot more happening behind the scenes than Job could ever know or understand. The Christian life is not how we live or who we are inside, but both. God is teaching Job to love Him with his whole heart, to enjoy God, and to trust Him fully.

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding;⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.

Proverbs 3:5-6

Job doesn't think it's Satan that is attacking him. He rightly believes it is God who is responsible for his suffering.

"But now ask the beasts, and they will teach you; and the birds of the air, and they will tell you;⁸ or speak to the earth, and it will teach you; and the fish of the sea will explain to you.⁹ Who among all these does not know that the hand of the LORD has done this,¹⁰ In whose hand is the life of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind?"

Job 12:7-10

Though Satan is part of the beginning, the Book of Job is really about the relationship between God and Job. (*Job 7:17-21; 9:2-3, 32-34; 10:2; 13:3, 13-15, 21-22; 16:12-14; 23:14-17*).

"What is man, that You should exalt him, That You should set Your heart on him,¹⁸ That You should visit him every morning and test him every moment?¹⁹ How long? Will You not look away from me and let me alone till I swallow my saliva?²⁰ Have I sinned? What have I done to You, O watcher of men? Why have You set me as Your target so that I am a burden to myself?²¹ Why then do You not pardon my transgression and take away my iniquity? For now I will lie down in the dust and You will seek me diligently, but I will no longer be."

Job 7:17-21

It might be easy to condemn Job's wife, but remember, she suffered too. She lost all of her children, her husband lost all of his possessions and was on the verge of dying. Despite her bad advice, she is not punished (*Ch. 42*).

RENEW your mind and thinking about Who God is and how you relate to Him.

There was a lot of bad thinking going on as Job and his friends conversed about Job's situation. Eventually, Job's friends morphed into enemies (Ch. 13:4-5; 16:1-5; 19:14-20).

My relatives have failed and my close friends have forgotten me.¹⁵ Those who dwell in my house, and my maidservants count me as a stranger; I am an alien in their sight. **Job 19:15**

All my close friends abhor me and those whom I love have turned against me. **Job 19:20**

They made false accusations (Ch. 22:4-11).

Is it because of your fear of Him that He corrects you and enters into judgment with you?⁵ Is not your wickedness great and your iniquity without end?⁶ For you have taken pledges from your brother for no reason and stripped the naked of their clothing.⁷ You have not given the weary water to drink and you have withheld bread from the hungry. **Job 22:4-7**

Pride was the difference between Job and his friends. They weren't suffering, Job was. They figured because Job was suffering that qualified them to be his judge. God rebukes these men in the end.

Job's three friends are more interested in judging Job than considering that his suffering could be the result of something other than sin. Job defends himself tenaciously (Ch. 31).

² For what is the allotment of God from above and the inheritance of the Almighty from on high?³ Is it not destruction for the wicked and disaster for the workers of iniquity?⁴ Does He not see my ways, "If I have walked with falsehood or if my foot has hastened to deceit⁶ let me be weighed on honest scales, that God may know my integrity. **Job 31:2-6**

Job's complaint is his unjust suffering. He is self-justified because he is righteous. He finds that Wisdom begins with righteous living but ends with the fear of God.

And to man He said, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom and to depart from evil is understanding.' **Job 28:28**

John the Baptist said it well, "*He must become greater, I must become less.*" **John 3:30 (NIV)**

REJOICE in God and ENJOY Him.

God gave Job (and will give us) a bigger picture!

"I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You.³ 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.⁴ Listen, please, and let me speak; You said, 'I will question you, and you shall answer Me.'⁵ "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You.⁶ Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." **Job 42:1-6**

What we see in Job is a portion of Job's Christian journey. By the time we read the last chapter, Job's wisdom has increased. He finds rest in God. St. Augustine said, "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you."

In the end, Job is not found to have done wrong. He did indeed suffer, but not for sin. He suffered to bring him to a greater love for God Himself. His picture expanded to go beyond righteous living, to loving God, to fearing Him, not for what He does for us but for Who He is.

Now the LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; for he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand yoke of oxen, and one thousand female donkeys.¹³ He also had seven sons and three daughters. **Job 42:12-13**