

Job Introduction and Chapters 1-2 - John Karmelich

As usual for me, I've prayed a lot about what to teach next. I'm pretty convinced God wants me to take on Job. My first thought was, "Didn't I do this not to long ago"? I believe God said, yes, but I've got a bunch of things I want to teach you, so stop stalling! With that said, here's the "Job saga" in a nutshell: The story follows a bet between God and Satan. In effect Satan said, "Job only honors God because He blesses Job!" God allowed Satan to take away all Job's possessions and put him in great pain. Job had no idea why this happened. Then most of the book's about three of Job's friends debating with him why this happened. Remember none of them have any idea about the bet. Realize near the end of the book, Job gets back all he'd lost, and God says Job's three friends were wrong on their accusations. After that debate was over, a 4th guy speaks his mind for six chapters! God then appears "out of nowhere" to end the debate! God doesn't disclose the bet to Job. God just states in effect, "Who do you think you are to question Me? That leads to Job apologizing to God about questioning His will. After that God blesses Job with "double" of all that he lost, and his health got restored!

The big question of course, is how does any of this affect us? First and foremost, we may go through a time where "the bottom falls out of our world" and we can't explain why! In order to accomplish great things, we often have to go through great trials. As one pastor put it, "God has to test us, in order for us to give our testimony!" My point is as we study this book don't think, "too bad for Job", but remember that God cares about us too much to ever leave us alone! That also means He'll put us through trials to ask in effect, "Do you trust Me now, even through this?" A great question for all of us is can we praise God not after the trials are over, but before and during the trials to say in effect, "God I'll praise you for who You are, even though I don't know how this will work out!" By the way all things do work out for His glory, not ours. God created us to glorify Him with our lives. If we keep that in mind, it'll help the next time we have our own "Job moments".

OK then, time for my who, what, when, where and why's of the book of Job. First we don't know when it was written. Odds are good Job lived around the time of Abraham. It's definitely the oldest book we have in the bible "time wise" and the original Hebrew is an ancient form and translators do some guess work on a few of the words. There's no mention of the first five books of the Bible, which is a clue it's written before then. Most likely Job lived in what is northern Saudi Arabia today. So how did he know of God, if it's before say Abraham? Maybe he was influenced by one of Noah's descendants who lived a long time after the flood. Bottom line is Job knew who God was, and the book's written in an ancient form of Hebrew. The book has references to a few races of people who existed when Abraham, his son Isaac and his son Jacob existed so that's another date clue. Most scholars argue Job wrote the book and maybe the speeches by his three friends were written down then or afterwards. Bottom line, this book's very close to, or the same as it was about 4,000 years ago.

With that said, I promised to cover Chapters 1 and 2 so here we go: The first two chapters explains to us Job's story: He was wealthy (measured in lots of livestock) and he had 7 sons as well as 3 daughters. He was called the "greatest of all men of the east". Since the bible geographically tends to be written in terms of Israel, think of "the east" as east of Israel. The text emphasizes Job has a healthy fear of God. It's the idea that God calls us to be in fear of His judgment and use our lives to glorify Him. After that we get a few verses about Job's family. Most likely the text refers to each of his children having a party on their birthdays. All the siblings came. The text says after the party, Job would make a sacrifice the next morning as if to say, "In case the kids did mess up, here's a sacrifice on their behalf". His sacrifice won't affect the kids' salvation (that's up to them), but it shows Job's commitment to God.

Then the scene switches to heaven and Job had no idea about that. It appears Satan can enter heaven at will and give a report. Satan is not equal to God, but a created entity. Apparently, angels have free will just as we do. Remember a third of the angels chose to rebel with Satan. (Revelation 12:4.) My point is Satan gave a report on Job that was "He's only happy because You (God) blessed Him!" I visualize the angels watching this to see what God does. He says in effect, "Do your worst but don't harm his body!" In what I suspect was a quick time-period. Job was told all his animals were captured or killed. Then it says all his family were killed (except his wife)! I pondered the children's salvation! Yes I believe God judges us individually and the fact they will be in heaven (assumed) negates that tragedy from the view of their destiny. We'll see in a bit why the wife was spared! When Job found out all of this news, what he said in effect was "I came in this world naked, and I can take nothing with me, so bless God in spite of all this!" So, in spite of that trial, Job praised God and had a grateful heart for his life!

Of course, Satan wasn't done! He then said in Chapter 2, "Job blesses you because he has his health! I want to take away his health and then let's see if he still is grateful for his relationship with You!" Let's keep in mind what is Satan's motivation for doing this! Satan has understood since the garden of Eden that he has an unspecified but limited time to rule the world. That means he wants to stop people from believing in God and make those who do believe bad witnesses for Him. Therefore, to get Job to curse God in effect would be a victory for Satan. Even Job's wife in Verse 9 says, "Curse God and die". It is an indication of how she handled the tragedy of losing everything. Job even in his suffering did rebuke his wife. Never underestimate a long-married couple ability to argue even when in horrible pain!

Speaking of losing everything, Chapter 2, Verse 7 says Satan was allowed to put a disease on Job so he had boils all over his body. Then Verse 8 says Job sat in a pile of ashes (where things were burned). He cut his boils with a piece of pottery. Bottom line Job now lost his health as well as all that he had!

The last three verses will lead to a discussion that will last a few dozen chapters. We read of 3 of Job's friends showing up to investigate the story they heard of how Job suffered and lost everything. We get a time gap (implied) before that for these three men to show up. It's amazing me is none of those three said a word for seven days given the fact they all non-stopped dialogued for many chapters to come!

Bottom line here is Job suffered in tremendous ways, he has no idea why it happened and he never gets an answer to that question in this book. The dialogue coming up is about what caused the suffering, as we get debate and debate with no answer. While Job wished he was dead (normal when one suffers the way he did) we never read of Job say jumping off a cliff. Just the dialogue.

This leads back to you and me. Times of trials come to all of us. Sometimes we get past it and for lots of people they just have to deal with it, with no answer. We need to remember is that God is in charge, in effect it's "His Show" and we must deal with it the best we can. Does that mean we should avoid say seeing a doctor? Of course not. Just saying God allows things that are difficult. When we go through a difficult time in our lives, but we must trust that God has a purpose for that.

With that said, I invite you to join me for my second study of Job. We'll see what God desires to show us as we work our way through it. Again, if you liked this little study, I wrote a more detailed account some years back with the links on this web site! Thanks for reading this!