

INTRODUCTION TO JOB

- I. 1:1 -- There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name *was* Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil. 42:17 -- So Job died being old and full of days.”
 - A. Without more, the description of Job’s life sounds idyllic.
 1. His story begins with a description for which we long.
 2. His life ends with a peaceful serenity for which we earnestly hope.
 - B. It is what occurs in between the beginning and the ending that causes us no end of consternation.
 1. Why do bad things happen to good people?
 2. Is God to blame for the evil that befalls the righteous?
 3. Do bad things happen to us because of our own sin?
- II. We are not the first to ponder these issues.
 - A. Believers have wrestled with the problem of evil since the beginning.
 1. The problem of evil is a problem only for believers in one God who is both all-powerful and all-loving.
 2. It is the focus of the earliest writing of scripture.
 3. Jesus disciples wrestled with it – John 9:1-2.
 - B. Basically, the problem of evil is a perceived contradiction between the two propositions that “God is all loving” and “God is all powerful.”
 1. If God is all loving and evil exists in the world, it must be because God is not all powerful and cannot remove it.
 2. If God is all powerful and evil exists in the world, it must be because God is not all loving and does not will to remove it.
 - C. This perceived contradiction as been discussed by philosophers and theologians for years.
 1. Ancient philosophers such as Epicurus (341 - 270 B.C.) have given us a succinct statement of the problem:
 - a) Either God wants to prevent evil and he cannot do it; or He can do it and does not want to; or He neither wishes to nor can do it; or He wishes to and can do it.
 - b) If he has the desire without the power, He is impotent; if He can, but has not the desire, He has

a malice which we cannot attribute to him; if He has neither the power nor the desire, He is both impotent and evil, and consequently not God; if he has the desire and the power, whence then comes evil, or why does He not prevent it?

2. It was the subject of Rabbi Kushner's work, "Why Bad Things Happen to Good People." His solution was to strip God of his omnipotence. He wills to remove evil from the world but is not able.
 3. It has also been discussed by non-philosophers and non-theologians.
 - a) Why me?
 - b) If God loved me He would not
 - c) If God loved me He would
- D. Along with the questions related to the existence of evil, there are also questions related to the degree, the intensity, and the gratuitousness of evil.
1. If God permits evil to accomplish good, can He not accomplish the good with a lesser degree of evil?
 2. Does God really need so much evil in the world to accomplish that which he is trying to accomplish?
- E. Is there any among us who has not suffered?
1. Certainly some have suffered more than others.
 - a) Did you get angry with God?
 - b) Did you question him?
 - c) Did you challenge him?
 - d) Did you question your faith?
 2. Just the presence in Scripture of a book like *Job* should be a comfort to all suffering saints.
 - a) It says that confusion, doubting, and affliction are not incompatible with faith.
 - b) It says that suffering accompanied by confusion, doubting, and affliction does not mean that you have lost fellowship and favor with God.
- F. *Job* not only focuses on affliction; it focuses on easy answers – answers that rely on man's wisdom rather than the nature and sovereignty of God.
1. *Job* tells us the truth.

2. It tells us the truth in a manner that prevents our reducing it to pious platitudes that are no more than Pablum for the soul.
- III. Is there an answer? Is there a God-given answer? Can we understand? Can we believe in the face of evil? Let us turn to the study of Job.
- A. Job is not a reasoned theodicy – a study of the justification of the ways of God to men.
 1. While this is a legitimate task of Christian apologetics, Job is the story of one man, his suffering and disasters, his search for answers, and his conclusions.
 2. His search takes place within and includes comments only by those who are committed to faith in one true God who is just in all his acts.
 - B. Solutions that are offered outside of faith in one true God who is just in all his acts are not considered.
 1. For example, polytheism's dualism in which evil exists over against good is not discussed.
 2. Naturalism in which the world is a closed system and God does nothing is not discussed.
 3. Deism in which God creates the world and then withdraws is not discussed.
 4. The book of Job accepts no limitation on either the goodness or the power of God.
 - C. The book of Job takes the world seriously – it is God's making and it is good.
 1. God is delighted with all of his creation, but he is especially delighted with mankind who alone are in his image.
 - a) A man is able to talk to God and God answers him.
 - b) Human experience is the place in this world where God's goodness is supremely displayed and experienced.
 2. Therefore, Job insists on a meaningful life here and now in time between birth and death.
 - D. The moral issue at the center of Job focuses on truth taught by both nature and scripture – a man reaps what he sows in this life.

1. Rewards for righteousness and punishment for evil cannot all await final judgment.
2. Yet we see the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer.
3. Evil is not always (we are inclined to say not ever) punished in proportion to guilt; good is not always (we are inclined to say not ever) rewarded in proportion to merit.
4. The case of Job brings to the fore the test of faith in its severest form – the supremely righteous man who suffers the greatest imaginable calamities.
 - a) How can he – or anyone – continue to believe that God is just and fair in his treatment of people?
 - b) God is responsible for what happens to Job – indirectly by permission if not directly.

I. Background.

A. Authorship and date.

1. The authorship and date of *Job* is surrounded by more mystery than perhaps any other Old Testament book.
 - a) The author's name is not mentioned anywhere in the book or elsewhere in scripture. Accordingly, it is not possible to determine the author with certainty.
 - b) Some attribute it to Job himself or some unknown ancient Idumean (it was obtained by David in his conquest of Idumea); others to Elihu, Moses, Solomon or someone around his time, an unknown who lived around the Jewish captivity, or Ezra.
2. Some facts that help narrow the possibilities.
 - a) The book has a "foreign flavor." It's style is different from that of Hebrew compositions.
 - (1) The customs, figures of speech, etc. are not of Judea.
 - (2) It does have an Oriental background, but is not Hebraic unless it came from the earliest history before Israel became structured so as to distinguish it from other Orientals.

- (3) There are a number of words in the book with Arabic roots that are used in a manner not common with Hebrew.
- b) The book contains numerous allusions to pre-Exodus events, the giving of the Law, and the establishment of Jewish institutions, and none to events that are post-Exodus.
 - (1) Job 10:9 -- Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast fashioned me as clay; And wilt thou bring me into dust again? (ASV)
 - (2) Job 27:3 -- (For my life is yet whole in me, And the spirit of God is in my nostrils); (ASV)
 - (3) Job 33:4 -- The Spirit of God hath made me, And the breath of the Almighty giveth me life. (ASV)
 - (4) Job 31:33 -- If like Adam I have covered my transgressions, By hiding mine iniquity in my bosom, (ASV)
 - (5) Job 22:15-16 -- Wilt thou keep the old way Which wicked men have trodden? ¹⁶ Who were snatched away before their time, Whose foundation was poured out as a stream, (ASV) (Keil and Delitsch say this refers to the flood, and the KJV so translates it.)
 - (6) The worship described in Job, the view of religion found in Job relate to a form of worship that was characteristic of the Patriarchal age, prior to the exodus from Egypt.
 - (7) After the exodus, Hebrew literature is replete with references to it. The exodus provides in both Hebrew prose and poetry a rich source of illustration of the care and provision of God.
 - (a) There are no indisputable references to the exodus, to Egyptian bondage, the oppression of Pharaoh, to Moses, the giving of the law, the wilderness

- wanderings, or the final settlement in the Promised Land.
 - (b) There is no reference to Hebrew festivals, names of the tribes, religious rites.
 - (c) Many events, such as the destruction of Pharaoh would have been right on point to the arguments of Job's friends.
- (8) These things seem to indicate that Job was not written by a Jew after the exodus.
- c) There are insufficient indications that the book was penned by Elihu.
- (1) Elihu pretends to wisdom, claims inspiration, and asserts the ability to so enlighten that it will end the discussion.
 - (2) Yet he proposes but one idea that had not been advanced earlier in the debate – the idea that suffering is designed not to punish sin but for the benefit of the sufferer; therefore, suffering is not inconsistent with righteousness.
 - (3) He abounds in repetition; his observations are less profound than Eliphaz, his knowledge of nature was less extensive than that of Job.
 - (4) The author of the book evidently understood the entire affair, and, if Elihu were the author it seems that he would have put the reasons for Job's suffering in his speech.
- d) The supposition that Job penned the book meets every consideration.
- (1) It is consistent with the foreign (non-Jewish) flavor of the book, and the use of Arabic words now unknown in Hebrew.
 - (2) It is consistent with the allusions to the nomadic lifestyle of the times.
 - (3) It is consistent with the style of worship to which reference is made.

- (4) Job lived 140 years after his affliction, thus providing him time to write the book.
 - (5) Bookmaking was known in his day. Job 19:23,24; 31:35.
 - (6) It is consistent with what we see of Job in his speeches, *i.e.*, he had the ability. He goes beyond all of the speakers except God.
- e) Some suppose that, while the book was penned by Job, it was adopted and modified by Moses and published to the Hebrews with his acknowledged books as a part of inspiration.
- (1) Moses spent 40 years in the desert in the area of Horeb.
 - (2) The book would be helpful to the Jews in connection with their deliverance from bondage. It addressed a question that must have been in their minds – why the people of God suffer – and it demonstrated that God still loved his people, would deliver them, and bestow prosperity upon them.
 - (3) That Moses was not the original author is supported by:
 - (a) It is not in Moses' style.
 - (b) Moses' poetry consistently referred to God as "Jehovah"; "Jehovah" rarely occurs in Job.
 - (c) Job uses numerous words with roots that are either obsolete or are found only in the Arabic or Chaldean.
 - (d) The references to Arabic customs would not likely have been familiar to Moses.

II. Questions addressed by Job.

- A. Job inquires into some of the greatest mysteries of life.
 1. Why are some men (exceptionally) prosperous?
 2. Why are some men beset by poverty and misfortune?
 3. Does God care for men; does He not care for men?
 4. Is there such a thing as disinterested goodness?
 5. What does this life lead to?

6. Is the grave the end of everything?
 7. If God rules the world, does he rule it on the principle of absolute justice? If so, when does that justice appear?
 8. Can a man be just before God?
 9. Can man comprehend God?
- B. Questions in which these mysteries are explored.
1. Is there such a thing as disinterested goodness?
 - a) Satan denies it (at least by implication, 1:9), and the world has denied it ever since.
 - b) This question is answered by the entire narrative.
 - c) Job is tested and tried in every conceivable manner – misfortune, disease, desertion of his wife, charges of friends – yet he retains his integrity, remains faithful to God, and continues his trust in God.
 - d) A crucial test has been given and passed, and there is no reason to suppose that the result would be different with any righteous man.
 2. Upon what basis is prosperity or poverty, sorrow or joy, distributed to men in this life?
 - a) The three friends have a simple answer – upon the basis of man’s deserts.
 - b) Job opposes this argument with all his power, asserting that he is not the cause of the calamities that have befallen him.
 - c) But if not, then how are they to be accounted for?
 - d) Does God just not care, goodness and evil are indifferent to him?
 - (1) If not, why do so many of the ungodly prosper?
 - (2) Why is the righteous man so often scorned and oppressed?
 - e) Job despairs of answering the question, and is almost driven to question the justice of God.