



Job 1:1-12

Part 1 - The Gathering Storm

4/16/2023

We are going to the book of Job today.

This is a book with 42 chapters, and we plan on covering it in 9 Sundays. So we will be flying over large sections of the book, trying to hit the most pivotal passages and main ideas here. But we'd encourage you to read Job one or two times over the next couple of months to fill in some of the more granular details as we go through.

Job is a book about a righteous man who has it all, then loses it in a moment, suffers greatly, and feels that God has dropped the ball. He wrestles with why God allows all of this pain in his life when God is just and good and Job didn't deserve it.

He has some friends who come along to try to comfort him, but instead they throw some bad theology at him that doesn't comfort, so Job argues with them, until, surprisingly, God breaks his silence and speaks.

And God, in his answer, is far more gracious than we might expect. And He shows Himself to be far greater and bigger and beyond us that Job was thinking.

And in the end Job is quiet, He receives what the Lord has to say, and God is so gracious that He even restores all of Job's wealth.

And we need this book, because while most of us won't suffer quite as acutely as Job did, we will suffer, and there will be pain and confusion that cause us to ask some of the same questions Job asks:

Is God who I thought he was, or is He proving that He is altogether different in allowing this situation that seems undeserved and mystifying?

How can we say that God is good and just when our lives, that He is sovereign over, don't always seem to be going well, and circumstances aren't fair or just, as far as we can tell?

And, when life is particularly difficult, we might ask if we've sinned to deserve this, if God is mad, if God loves us, and if we are even one of His children. Maybe God is good, but not to me. These are all things this book speaks to.

And Job, in his suffering, wants to be loyal to God. But he senses an estrangement and that His friendship with God was lost. God seemed close before, and now it seems to Job that God is against him. And Job laments his losses, but never asks for his old life back, except for that closeness he knew with God.

So this is also a book for those who sense an estrangement from God. Maybe we can trace it back to something, maybe we don't understand it at all, but God seems, at best, like an old friend that we remember but aren't still in touch with. It's almost like we're getting the silent treatment from God. And we want to be reconciled with our old Divine Friend as Job did. There's hope in this book for us.

Because this book concludes with the longest conversation between God and a mere man in all of the Bible, and a restoration of Job, but best of all, a reconciliation of Job and God.

And, more than anything, like all books of the Bible, this is a book about Jesus. It describes the undeserved suffering of a relatively righteous man in Job, which prepares us for the idea that the righteous can suffer even when they don't deserve it. So then, when we come to the New Testament, we see in Jesus the only perfectly righteous one suffering in a completely undeserved way, and we have a category for that.

In the ancient near east, almost everybody thought suffering happens because you've sinned or made the gods mad, and blessings come because you've been good or made the gods happy.

The fact that Jesus, the perfect one, was going to suffer was confusing enough to His followers. How much worse would it have been if their imaginations hadn't been shaped by the book of Job and their minds prepared with a story of a righteous one who suffers undeservedly. This book prepared the way for the Lord in that way.

This book tells the important truth that not all of God's servants who are faithful to God are receiving a material reward. Many of God's servants have scars.

And the Ultimate Servant of God bears scars for eternity.

So those are some of the things we'll see in this book between now and the end of June.

So let's jump in. Job 1:1

Job 1: [1] There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil.

So Job is a good guy. He knows the Lord, he tries to do what is right. "Fearing God" means that Job loves God, trembles at the thought of breaking his commands, serves him, and is basically the same when nobody is looking because he knows God is looking.

You might be comfortable talking about someone behind their back but you'd never say those things when they are around. That's fearing them. And to fear God is to know He is always around and to strive to be one person everywhere - knowing He is always listening and looking.

And Job is there. This doesn't imply absolute perfection. Later on, in Job 31:33 he says he doesn't conceal his transgressions, so he has transgressions and he knows it. So he doesn't make a claim to absolute perfection. But he is righteous and upright, Job is the real deal.

And, as people would have expected in their day, he was blessed materially:

Job 1:2-3 [2] There were born to him seven sons and three daughters. [3] He possessed 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, and 500 female donkeys, and very many servants, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the east.

He's got a family of 12, a good job, lots of employees. He is living the good life in the land of Uz.

Not to be confused with the land with a Yellow Brick Road, Uz was probably in modern-day Syria. (Although, fun fact, when they translated the Wizard of Oz movie into

modern Hebrew, whoever wrote the subtitles just called in the Land of Uz. So today, Hebrew-speaking children reading this story in the Bible probably picture munchkins and flying monkeys and wicked witches in this land where Job lived. It would be hard for them not to picture Job as the Mayor of Munchkin City.)¹

And Job had a life that was profoundly happy:

Job 1:4 [4] His sons used to go and hold a feast in the house of each one on his day, and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them.

So to show us how abundantly blessed Job is - he has 10 adult children, and they all get along. There's no hint of family drama. They're rotating houses for big family feasts and everybody gets an invite.

And their joy isn't just a show, it isn't just a veneer - this family is the real deal. These were truly exceptional people, reared by truly exceptional Job.

They feast together, enjoying their wealth. But we know there's a risk with wealth:

Proverbs 30:7-9

**[7] Two things I ask of you;
deny them not to me before I die:
[8] Remove far from me falsehood and lying;
give me neither poverty nor riches;
feed me with the food that is needful for me,
[9] lest I be full and deny you
and say, "Who is the LORD?"
or lest I be poor and steal
and profane the name of my God. (ESV)**

There's a risk in being poor in that you might be tempted to steal. And a risk in wealth is that you become full and deny the Lord, not needing Him anymore.

But Job hasn't forgotten his need for the Lord. (This is rare - wealth often deadens our

¹[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Land_of_Uz#:~:text=Uz%20has%20often%20been%20identified,%2Dday%20Jordan%20\(yellow\).](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Land_of_Uz#:~:text=Uz%20has%20often%20been%20identified,%2Dday%20Jordan%20(yellow).)

sense of need, but it doesn't have to, there are many examples of wealthy righteous people in scripture, and Job is one of them.)

All of the success hasn't gone to Job's head:

Job 1:[5] And when the days of the feast had run their course, Job would send and consecrate them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, "It may be that my children have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts." Thus Job did continually.

Job would offer sacrifices for his kids, he would pray for them. They had it all, but he wanted more than anything for them to be right with God. He wanted his kids to know and fear the Lord as he did. So he intercedes for the kids, and offers sacrifices for them.

And this has been their life probably for a long time. The kids have grown and have their own estates, so they're really only known righteousness and material blessing, humility, joy, and fear of the Lord. It's an instagram-perfect life for Job and his family.

Later in the book, after Job has lost all of this, Job will look back and long to have these days again. Listen to how he describes these days:

Job 29:2-6

[2] "Oh, that I were as in the months of old,
as in the days when God watched over me,
[3] when his lamp shone upon my head,
and by his light I walked through darkness,
[4] as I was in my prime,
when the friendship of God was upon my tent,
[5] when the Almighty was yet with me,
when my children were all around me,
[6] when my steps were washed with butter,
and the rock poured out for me streams of oil!

Job 29:11-21

[11] When the ear heard, it called me blessed,
and when the eye saw, it approved,
[12] because I delivered the poor who cried for help,

and the fatherless who had none to help him.
[13] The blessing of him who was about to perish came upon me,
and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.
[14] I put on righteousness, and it clothed me;
my justice was like a robe and a turban.
[15] I was eyes to the blind
and feet to the lame.
[16] I was a father to the needy,
and I searched out the cause of him whom I did not know.
[17] I broke the fangs of the unrighteous
and made him drop his prey from his teeth.
[18] Then I thought, 'I shall die in my nest,
and I shall multiply my days as the sand,
[19] my roots spread out to the waters,
with the dew all night on my branches,
[20] my glory fresh with me,
and my bow ever new in my hand.'
[21] "Men listened to me and waited
and kept silence for my counsel.

He remembers these early days as days when he was so genuinely close to God, surrounded by his family, maintaining a great reputation, and doing good, caring for the poor, advocating for a just society.

Everything was good in Job's life in those days.

Job really has no idea what's about to hit him.

Then in Chapter 1, verse 6, God allows us to see something Job doesn't see. Job probably never in his lifetime learned about what we are about to see. It happened in some spiritual realm, outside of Job's view. God reveals it to us through the author of this book, who was probably either Moses or Solomon - we're not sure. But the author knows about this scene, and we know about it, but Job doesn't - Job is still living the good life when this goes down:

Job 1:[6] Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. [7] The LORD said to Satan,

“From where have you come?” Satan answered the LORD and said, “From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it.”

So the scene now is the Divine throne room.

A scene like this is described elsewhere:

1 Kings 22:19 [19] And Micaiah said, “Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing beside him on his right hand and on his left...

Psalm 82:1-2 “[1] God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment: [2] “How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? Selah

God governs the universe in the midst of this royal assembly, with spiritual beings and angels around Him. It seems that God rules and and reigns over all things through a council of little-g “gods,” beings that aren’t God like God is (they are still limited, created beings), but compared to you and me, they are gods, and we would perceive them as gods. These beings include the angels, and for sure they are not God:²

Psalm 86:8 “There is none like you among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like yours.

The Bible is very monotheistic - there is one true God, one uncreated one, one eternal one, one omniscient and all powerful one.

But there are powerful spiritual beings that He has made through which he governs all things. They were around before we were, created before creation.

In Job 38:7 we will see that when God created all things, these “sons of God” (as they’re called there) shouted for joy.

So in this counsel of spiritual beings, God sits enthroned, and God enacts his policies for governing the world.³

² For more reading on this topic, I recommend Michael Heiser’s book [The Unseen Realm](#).

³ [Piercing Leviathan, God’s Defeat of Evil in the Book of Job](#), by Eric Ortlund. (Downer’s Grove: Intervarsity, 2021). P. 13.

And we get to peer here into the throne room, the greatest “room where it happens.”

And this is important because later in this book, Job is going to have a real problem with God’s policies and how He governs the world. Job’s friends will come to him and say, “You’re only suffering because you’ve been bad, and a God who keeps good order in the world wouldn’t cause you to suffer if it weren’t because of something you did.”

Job will say, “A good God only allows suffering when someone has done wrong, and I have done no wrong, so therefore God is doing something wrong. Something has gone wrong in this divine counsel.”

So we get to see into this throne room for a second, a room Job becomes suspicious of.

We think of God ruling all things rightly and with perfect justice, and at this time, so did Job, but soon he is going to see this divine counsel as a dark and smoke-filled room where God is ruling perhaps unjustly. He will have serious questions about how God is running the show - and some commentators have even described Job’s complaint as a bit of a lawsuit against God.

So in this room where it happens, the angels are presenting themselves before God, and with them is Satan.

Satan is described as a real being in scripture, a fallen angel who was so corrupted by his pride that he is now opposed to God and his works (see Isaiah 14).

C.S. Lewis said, “There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.”

We don’t want to be materialists or magicians.

Satan is a limited, created being. He is not all powerful and isn’t everywhere, not everything bad is his direct work, not everything demonic is done by Satan directly. He is not the opposite of God or as strong as God, he’s not arm-wrestling God in some kind of match that looks to be pretty close - He is still a created being far below God, but he is real.

But also, he fits right in among these powerful spiritual beings.

And he's called by a number of names in scripture (The devil, lucifer, Beelzebul.) But here he is called by a name commonly used of him, Satan, which means accuser or adversary.

We think of Satan's work as possessions and other spooky phenomena, and those things are part of his work. But they don't seem to be his main job. When Satan is doing his deep work, focusing on what he does best, he is accusing.

Revelation 12:10 "And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God."

Satan is an adversary of God who works through accusation. In scripture, remember that Jesus was condemned by false accusers. Stephen the martyr was condemned by false witnesses.

When we think about spiritual warfare and the work of the devil and his angels, accusation should come to mind.

When we believe the worst about someone without evidence, when we listen to gossip and rumors and treat them like they're true without confirmation, when we give up objectivity and assume bad reports about people are all true, we can be falling into his trap.

Christians should be wise and discerning when it comes to sorting through accusations, and can't believe all accusations are true, knowing who Satan is, and knowing the Christian story.

We know false accusations can be a problem, because in God's law in Deuteronomy he spelled out that if you falsely accused someone and that was found out, you would get the punishment you were seeking for them. So "innocent until proven guilty" is an old and biblical principle.

So we don't condemn quickly, or without good evidence. Because accusation is a tool of the enemy.

Now this doesn't mean we are slow to help those who claim to have been harmed - we help quickly, and help them verify the wrong that has been done to them and get justice. But we recognize a ditch on both sides of the road - the ditch of now responding to those who are crying out for help and are being harmed, and the ditch of false accusation.

So the accuser comes in to the Divine counsel.

Job 1:8 And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there

is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?"

So God, after asking where Satan has been, brings up Job to Him.

And God's words sound almost like the words of a proud Father - Satan, you make your accusations against a lot of people, and many of them are true, many of them stick. But look at my servant Job. (God here uses a phrase that is used to describe the great ones like Abraham (Genesis 26:24), Moses (Exodus 14:31), and Savid (2 Samuel 7:5.)⁴

And God says "There is none like him on earth", a phrase used more often of God than of people.⁵

God, who knows hearts and motives and secrets, thinks highly of Job.

And for some reason, God brings up Job to the accuser. Satan, you have nothing to accuse Job of!

This brings Job to the attention of Satan.

Which means that Job is about to have all kinds of problems and dreadful suffering, not because he has been bad, but because he has been righteous.

Sometimes faithfulness draws the attention of the enemy. We can get pretty judgmental and assume, like Job's friends will assume, that calamity comes into our lives because of sin. And it certainly can - we often reap what we sow. But sometimes trials come because of faithfulness.

I know of a pastor in another state whose ministry has been marked by faithfulness to God's word, but also major trials and difficulties and sins to deal with in his church. And it's easy to assume he must be doing something wrong to have all of those problems. But it could also be that faithfulness has drawn the attention of a real adversary.

So God points out Job to Satan and says 'none of your accusations will stick to that guy.'

But Satan never lets the truth get in the way of an accusation:

Job 1:9 Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for no reason? 10 Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. 11 But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you

⁴ Ibid. 14.

⁵ Ibid. 13-14.

to your face."

So Satan's false accusation against Job is this: of course Job loves you, God. You've spoiled him rotten. He's like a child who doesn't really love his dad, but because his dad keeps buying him lavish gifts, he keeps coming around.

So cut off the allowance. Stop giving him gifts. Take away all these good things you have given him, and not only will Job stop coming around to worship you, he will curse you. And that meant that Job will despise God, he will treat God as worthy of his disgust.⁶

Look at the nature of his false accusation: he assumes the worst about Job's heart, he reads his experience with others onto Job, he assumes the worst of Job's motives. [Let's not be false accusers of one another like this! It can feel holy, you can feel superior, you can feel smart like you know something - you feel like you can read minds and predict the future, you can be right sometimes. But assuming the worst and accusing without grounds isn't the work of the Lord.

But most lies contain some truth. It often happens that people seem to love the Lord when things are going well and would bail if things went poorly. Satan is wrong about Job, but isn't making up some totally far-fetched scenario.

I've sat with easily a dozen people over the years who have had life take turns for the worst, and now they are not only despairing about their circumstances, but disgusted by God, speaking of God like He is useless, renouncing God, taking their ball and going home because God's governing of their lives seems so senseless and cruel and harsh and unfair.

And Satan falsely accuses Job of being one of them, of having fair-weather faith. Of being indifferent toward God but loving his blessings.

And Satan says, "Take away all the stuff you're giving him and Job will walk away, too."

"Does Job fear God for no reason?"

And this is the crux of the test Job will face, and that we will face in our suffering and losses:

Do we love God and fear God and walk with God because of God, or because of His gifts? When we lose a lot or it costs us to follow God, will we remain faithful?

⁶ Ibid. 14.

Test for Job and a test for us:

Job 1:12 And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand." So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

We have failed the test. But Jesus hasnt.

We needed a savior like that.

Poc

Assurance:

Hebrews 13:12 "So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood.