

## Through the Bible at 30,000 Feet

*Job | Whatever Happens, Worship!*

North Center | January 2, 2022

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Let's begin by opening our Bibles to the Table of Contents at the very beginning of your Bible. This morning, we are entering into a new section in our Old Testament, and so I think it would be helpful for (us at this point in our study) to take a quick look at how the OT is divided up.

1. Law (5)<sup>1</sup>
  - a. The 2<sup>nd</sup> half of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy largely consist of God giving His people His laws of love.<sup>2</sup>
    - i. Here is how you love God.
    - ii. Here is how you love one another.
  - b. Pentateuch | Greek: "*Five books*"
    - i. *Penta*: "five"
    - ii. *Teuchos*: "scrolls"
  - c. Torah | Hebrew: "*To instruct*"
2. History (12)<sup>3</sup>
  - a. They tell the history of God's people from their entrance into the Promised Land (*Joshua*) and their experience in the Promised Land (*Judges, Ruth, Samuel, Kings*) to the destruction of Jerusalem (*2 Kings & 2 Chronicles*) and finally to the rebuilding of Jerusalem (*Ezra & Nehemiah*).
  - b. The last of the history books is *Esther*.
3. Writings (6)<sup>4</sup>
  - a. These books are also referred to as the "*poetical*" books because the *Psalms*, the *Song of Solomon*, and *Lamentations* are full of rich poetry.
  - b. And they are referred to as the "*wisdom*" books because *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes*, and *Job* were primarily written to impart wisdom to those who read them: both practical wisdom & divine wisdom.
4. Prophets (16)<sup>5</sup>
  - a. The prophets were those who spoke to the people on behalf of God.
    - i. Sometimes, that meant telling Israel things that God was going to do ahead of time.
    - ii. Sometimes, that meant explaining to Israel why events happened in the past the way they did.
    - iii. Sometimes, it was a message of *warning*. Sometimes, of *destruction*. Sometimes, of *deliverance*. Whatever their message, if they were truly a prophet of God, their message was always true.
  - b. The prophetic books record their messages.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 22:37-40

<sup>3</sup> Joshua, Judges, *Ruth*, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, *Esther*

<sup>4</sup> Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Lamentations

<sup>5</sup> Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, *Daniel*, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

<sup>6</sup> The prophets could further be divided into **Major Prophets** (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel) and **Minor Prophets** (The Twelve).

The Jewish Old Testament has the same books, but they divide it a little differently than we do.<sup>7</sup> They only have **three divisions**: the law, prophets, and writings.<sup>8</sup> And some even arrange the books a little differently.<sup>9</sup> But no matter which division we follow, Job belongs to the genre called the “Writings.”

The **THEME** of Job is **the Sovereignty of God over the Suffering of His People**. This wasn't intentional on my part! I did not plan on starting 2022 with a message on God's sovereignty over our suffering, but (as we saw last week) there are no coincidences in the providence of God. Which means God planned for us to start this year together by setting the eyes of our hearts on Him (His goodness and His power and His justice and His sovereignty) specifically in the context of our suffering.

**Q.** Why would God have us begin with this book?

**A.** Perhaps because He knows that, as a church, we are going to need this book in the days ahead.

- Not to make us fearful about the future...knowing that God may have suffering in store.
- But to fill us with confidence that when our days (or seasons) of suffering comes, we know that God is in control and that His ways are just and that His plans are good and that His love is secure and that the end will be better than the beginning.

Turn in your Bibles to the book of **Job**.

If this was your first time opening a Bible, you might assume that this particular book was about **employment**. Your **career**. How to be successful at your **job!** “*The book of job!*”

But (as you know) this book isn't specifically about your employment; it's about a man who lived a very long time ago whose name was Job.

## PRAY

### CONTEXT

Nobody knows for certain when Job lived, but the clues in the story suggest that he probably lived in the days of the patriarchs<sup>10</sup> (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob).<sup>11</sup>

If you enjoy **good literature**, the book of Job is widely recognized as one of the greatest literary masterpieces ever written. Even those who don't believe in the Bible will use Job as an example of the highest quality of writing.

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<sup>7</sup> For example: Ruth and Esther are part of the “Writings”, not “History”.

<sup>8</sup> This is commonly called the **TaNaK** (*Torah, Nevi'im, Ketuvim*).

<sup>9</sup> E.g., **Babylonian Talmud, Baba Bathra 14b–15a** in which Ruth is placed right before the Psalms; Job is placed immediately after Psalms; Esther comes after Daniel.

<sup>10</sup> A patriarch is a male head of a family or tribe. Since AI&J are the heads of the family of Israel, they are commonly referred to as the patriarchs.

<sup>11</sup> The length of Job's life (140 years after his unique trials were over, 42:16) is similar to that of Terah (205 years), Abraham (175 years), Isaac (180 years), and Jacob (147 years). Also, the writer measured Job's wealth in terms of his livestock, which is how Moses evaluated the wealth of Abraham and Jacob (1:3; 42:12; compared to Gen 12:16; 13:2; 30:43; 32:5). Thirdly, the Sabeans and Chaldeans (1:15, 17) were nomads during the patriarchal period, but not later. Finally, the Hebrew word for “piece of silver [money]” (*qesitah*; 42:11) is found elsewhere only in connection with Jacob (Gen. 33:19).

<https://www.versebyverseministry.org/bible-answers/when-in-history-does-the-story-of-job-take-place>

Many of you here know the story of Job, but what you maybe didn't know is that the actual story is only three chapters long:

- **Chapters 1–2** tell the story of the crisis that slams into Job's life.
- And then **the final 9 verses of chapter 42** describe how the crisis is resolved.
- The other 39 chapters of the book (**3–42**) record a conversation that Job has about the sovereignty of God over the world that He has made and over the people He has created... and over all the events that occur within the world and within the lives of the people that He created.

For the sake of helping us see the overview of the book, I've divided the book into three sections:

1. THE CRISIS (1–2)
2. THE CONVERSATION (3–42:8)
3. THE CONCLUSION (42:9–17)

## CRISIS (1–2)

### READ 1:1–3

- **Job's treasure (1–5)**<sup>12</sup>
  - From the world's eyes, Job's wealth was measured by his worldly possessions (3)
    - **We make the same judgements today:** "Look at everything she has; God has really blessed her!"
    - Yes, all of your possessions are given to you by God,<sup>13</sup> but that isn't how God evaluates your wealth or your success.<sup>14</sup>
  - From God's eyes, Job's real treasure was God Himself. His initial biography begins and ends by describing his relationship with God.
    - He pursued *His* relationship with God (1:1)
      - There are no action verbs around his wealth. Yes, he's wealthy, but his wealth isn't what moves him. God moves him.
    - He pursued *His* children's relationship with God (1:5)
      - He isn't pursuing worldly possessions for his children. All of his actions toward his children are directed toward their relationship with God.
- **Job's tragedy (13–19)**
  - In a single moment, everything in Job's life changed.
  - In a single moment, he went from being one of the most successful, wealthy, prestigious men on the planet...to having absolutely no worldly possessions.
  - How did that happen? *Here's the story.*

### READ 1:6–22

Few of us have ever experienced hardship to this magnitude.

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<sup>12</sup> See also Job 29:7–17.

<sup>13</sup> I.e., Acts 17:25; 1 Cor 1:7; James 1:17.

<sup>14</sup> I.e., 1 Sam 16:7.

Satan said that Job would curse God. *Why?*

- Because it's human nature to curse the one who takes away your treasure.

But Job didn't curse God. *Why not?*

- Because God didn't take away Job's treasure. He took away all of Job's earthly possessions, but He didn't take away Job's treasure.

But Job's tragedies aren't over...

### **READ 2:1-13**

By the time we get to the end of chapter 2, Job has lost everything but his life and his God.

- Possessions
- Children
- Support of his wife
- Health
- His body is covered in boils
  - And he is sitting in a pile of ashes scraping at his body with a piece of broken pottery
- And his own friends don't even recognize him (**2:12**)

But, once again, instead of cursing God, *as Satan said that he would and as his wife told him to*, Job continued to worship.

- When Job was on top of the mountain, God was his treasure, and when he was in the lowest pit, God was his treasure.
- Neither *Satan* nor *suffering* could take that away.

There was another reason that Job responded the way he did in the midst of tragedy: **his theology**.

- **Job's theology (1:21; 2:10)**

Who did Job believe was ultimately behind the tragedy in his life?

- The Sabeans? The Chaldeans? Satan? Rotten luck?

### **READ 1:21; 2:10**

- He believed that God was ultimately behind the good & the adversity in his life.
  - Even Satan knows this!
    - Satan never once thought that Job would curse him, even though he was the one actively pursuing Job's destruction. If Job cursed anybody, Satan believed that Job would curse God (**1:11; 2:5**) because Satan knows better than anyone what it means for God to be sovereign. Satan can't touch a hair of Job's head or a penny in his bank account without apart from God's sovereign will.
  - Job can respond the way he did because he knew that every situation, every event, every possession...ultimately comes from God.
- He believed that, no matter what, God was worthy to be worshiped.

He trusted God on the mountains. And he trusted God in the valleys.

“Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.”  
~ Job 13:15

“It is well with my soul”<sup>15</sup>

### CONVERSATION (3–42)

- Some of Job’s friends come and just sit with him for seven days.
  - When they finally being talking, they are all wrestling with the question of suffering and the sovereignty of God.
    - Have you ever wrestled with the question of suffering?<sup>16</sup>
      - Job is wrestling with the fact that God has unleashed all this suffering upon him even though he isn’t actively engaged in any kind of intentional sin against the Lord. *I don’t understand why...* (3:11–26)
      - His friends, on the other hand, are convinced that they have God figured out. They are absolutely certain that God must be punishing Job for some secret sin. *Confess your sins, man...*
- Eliphaz | READ 4:7<sup>17</sup>
- Bildad | READ 8:6
- Zophar | READ 11:10–12
- Eliphaz | READ 22:5–11
- None of them (neither Job nor his friends) have a category for God bringing tragedy into somebody’s life unless that person is engaged in some kind of wickedness against God.
  - Suffering must be God’s way of punishing: or so they thought.
- One of Job’s biggest struggles is that there is nobody who can plead his case before God. He trusts God, but he is really struggling with the justice in his situation.

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<sup>15</sup> **Horatio Spafford** knew something about life’s unexpected challenges. He was a successful attorney and real estate investor who lost a fortune in the great Chicago fire of **1871**. Around the same time, his beloved four-year-old son died of scarlet fever.

Thinking a vacation would do his family some good, he sent his wife and four daughters on a ship to England, planning to join them after he finished some pressing business at home. However, while crossing the Atlantic Ocean, the ship was involved in a terrible collision and sunk. More than 200 people lost their lives, including all four of Horatio Spafford’s precious daughters. His wife, Anna, survived the tragedy. Upon arriving in England, she sent a telegram to her husband that began: “*Saved alone. What shall I do?*”

Horatio immediately set sail for England. At one point during his voyage, the captain of the ship, aware of the tragedy that had struck the Spafford family, summoned Horatio to tell him that they were now passing over the spot where the shipwreck had occurred.<sup>1</sup>

As Horatio thought about his daughters, words of comfort and hope filled his heart and mind. He wrote them down, and they have since become a well-loved hymn:

*When peace like a river, attendeth my way,  
When sorrows like sea billows roll—  
Whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to know  
It is well, it is well with my soul.*

<https://www.thetabernaclechoir.org/articles/it-is-well-with-my-soul.html>

<sup>16</sup> The technical term for this is “**theodicy**”: the question of how suffering and evil coheres with the sovereignty and the goodness of God.

<sup>17</sup> They even blame Job for the death of his children (5:4)

- In fact, in **chapter 24**, Job is struggling to see justice anywhere in the world. He *treasures* God, and he *trusts* God, but he is also bewildered with God. He can't understand why God is running the world the way He is, and he can't understand why God is ruining his life the way He is; and so Job is wishing that there was a way for him to go to court with God and plead his case. But he knows that nobody can stand before God, and so Job is wishing that he had a Mediator.
  - **READ 9:32–33** | I wish there was a mediator
    - Here is an amazing thought: what Job so desperately wanted, you and I have. His Name is Jesus!
      - Did you know that?
    - **Hebrews 7:25** tells us that Jesus is always at work on behalf of His people in making intercession to God.
      - It was always God's plan to provide a mediator for His people.<sup>18</sup>

There are so many LESSONS that we can learn about God from this 39-chapter conversation that we could spend the next year looking at something totally different every Sunday.

Let me share just **three lessons**:

- (1) **Suffering is not the time for lectures**
  - Suffering is a time to listen and a time to love
  - Job's friends were amazing comforters...*until they opened their mouths.*
    - **6:14** | You should be showing me "kindness"
    - **6:27** | You "overwhelm" your friend
    - **16:2** | "Miserable comforters"
    - **19:2** | "How long will you torment my soul and break me in pieces with word?"
- (2) **True thoughts about who God is does *not* always lead to true conclusions about what God does.**
  - **He is sovereign**
    - *That doesn't mean* that hardships will never come into your life
  - **He is good**
    - *That doesn't mean* everything He gives us will always feel pleasant or easy or fun.

THE CROSS!

Knowing that God is good and loving and just and kind and all-powerful, I would have concluded that there is no way that God would ever put His only begotten Son on a cross for my sin.

- The cross is not good. The cross is not kind. The cross is not loving.
- Since Jesus never sinned, the cross is not just.
- And since God is all-powerful, He can keep that horrific death from ever happening.

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<sup>18</sup> Who knows, it could be that at the very same moment that Job was crying out for a mediator, God was making His covenant with Abram...or stopping Abram from sacrificing his son because of the promise that He would provide the lamb.

But my conclusions would have been wrong because I couldn't see everything that God was doing through the cross.

- On the cross, Jesus took my sin upon Himself. He was suffering the consequences for my sin, and so it was just.
- On the cross, Jesus was taking all of God's wrath for my sin so that I would never have to experience it. So it was an act of unspeakable mercy and kindness.
- On the cross, Jesus was destroying the power of sin over my life, and so it was good.
- On the cross, Jesus was paying for our adoption into the family of God, and so it was greatest act of love in the history of the world.

“God so love the world that He gave His only begotten Son...” (John 3:16)

The cross happened **because** God is loving and kind and merciful and good and sovereign – even though I would have never seen it that way while it was happening.

- (3) It should not surprise us that there are things about God that we do not understand.
  - **I was recently in the hospital**, and the doctors were doing all sorts of painful things that I don't fully understand:
    - *Poking needles in my arm*
    - *Taking blood out of me; putting unknown fluids into me*
    - *Applying pressure to parts of my body that were already in pain*
    - *Making me drink stuff that tasted terrible*
  - I understood very little of what they were doing, but I trusted that they had a good reason for everything they were doing – even if it caused me pain in the moment.
  - That's similar to how it is with God, except for the fact that:
    - God is wise beyond our understanding
    - God is perfect in all His ways
    - God knows our needs better than we know ourselves
    - He never makes a mistake.
- Finally, **in chapters 38–41**, God enters into the conversation, and He tells all of Job's friends that they were wrong (**42:7**). They were wrong in their accusations against Job, and they were wrong in their conclusions about God.
  - God isn't a mathematical equation where you can just plug in all the numbers, push enter, and instantly know exactly what God is going to do in a given situation – or why God has done something.
  - Yes, we can know true things about God which tell us something about the ways that He is going to work... For example:
    - He is only good, which means that all His ways are good.
    - He is omniscient (all knowing), which means that He will never make a mistake.
      - **But** those truths don't tell us whether or not God will answer our prayer by healing our body...
  - Job's friends knew some true things of God's character, and so they thought that made them experts on the ways of God.



But as William Cowper said (in 1773)...

“*God works in mysterious ways, His wonders to perform.*”

- That is especially true in suffering.
  
- But Job’s friends weren’t the only ones who had a wrong view of suffering. God also makes it clear that Job was wrong to accuse God of being unfair or unjust.
  - It is not wrong to *question* God, but it is wrong to *accuse* God.
  
- God closes the conversation (**38–41**) by asking Job a whole bunch of questions that Job can’t answer.

### **READ 38:4–7**

- Questions that Job couldn’t answer, and that was God’s point: Job, you can’t even begin to fathom the intricacies of the universe; so, what makes you think that you know something about your suffering that God doesn’t know?
  
- My ways are so high above your ways (**Isa 55:8–9**).

### **CONCLUSION (42:9–17)**

- Job repents of his accusations against God (42:6)
- Job’s friends repent of their accusations against Job (42:7–9)
- God restores all of Job’s losses (42:10)

And the end of Job’s story was better than the beginning (42:10–17).

**IN CLOSING**, here is how the story of Job prepares us for 2022...

1. Know that God is in control of your life.
2. Trust that He has a reason for everything that He brings into your life.
3. Believe that the best is yet to come...even in our suffering.
4. And whatever you do, worship!