

Announcement: Summer U! Finances at 95%

Introduction: Some of you are going to love this message. Some of you are going to be deeply disturbed and wonder if I am Orthodox or even sane. Some of you will get to 35 minutes from now and have the profound question – you want burgers or burritos for lunch?

But regardless of your response, it is Satan week here at CCC. Actually, it is always Jesus week, but there is an enemy of God who sets himself up to steal, kill and destroy that which God loves. And we are smart to know our enemy. Besides that, Job 1-2 has these images of what is happening in the presence of God that parallels what is happening on earth. It is kind of like a two stage play with an upper stage and a lower stage. So today, we will focus on the upper stage and it is so intriguing that I am just going to read what happens right after we find out that Job is a blameless and upright dude who loves his kids and honors God:

Job 1:6-12 NIV

⁶ One day the angels^[a] came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan^[b] also came with them. ⁷ The LORD said to Satan, “Where have you come from?”

Satan answered the LORD, “From roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it.”

⁸ Then the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.”

⁹ “Does Job fear God for nothing?” Satan replied. ¹⁰ “Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. ¹¹ But now stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face.”

¹² The LORD said to Satan, “Very well, then, everything he has is in your power, but on the man himself do not lay a finger.”

Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

I don't know about you, but this passage raises a ton of questions. Is Satan really allowed in heaven? Does God listen to Satan? Do God and Satan make bets? Does this result in human beings going through immense human suffering?

Now, before I go any further, I think I need to clarify what we do believe at CCC, because I am about to wander into some “I am not sure...” territory.

- We believe that the spiritual world is real. That there are good and evil spiritual forces that have some degree of influence on our lives – and our eternity.
- We believe that God is real and that he is good and that he is interested in our lives
- We believe that Satan is a real spiritual being, that he is in opposition to God and that his agenda is to steal, kill and destroy
- We believe that there is an awful lot that we don't understand about God, Satan, Angels, Demons and other spiritual forces, so we should approach all of these subjects with humility
- We believe that Jesus has the authority and power over all aspects of the spiritual world – the good and the evil. If you are sensing any of this in your own life and you want to talk or pray with someone, you can go to our prayer room every Sunday. Our healing and freedom team is there after each service and will be happy to consult and pray.
- If you are still with me, say "I am with you."

But here is what I am not sure of. Is the Satan of this story the same as the Satan of the garden of Eden, or the Satan in the desert of Temptation or the Satan that will be locked up for 1000 years then thrown in the lake of fire... And I lean toward the idea that it is not. Two reasons-

- 1) The questions raised by it being Satan are so hard that they seem to contradict key principles found elsewhere in Scripture
- 2) You would not think so in the original language

Now, those who have been around a while know that I don't mess with Greek and Hebrew much because I only dabble in the languages – I am utterly dependent on other scholars and experts to help discern. But in my study, I have found something important to delineate. And I thought you'd want to know the **scholars I am consulting** in their books and videos – Dr John Walton, Dr Michael Heiser and Dr Tim Mackie.

There are two language issues in this passage that are gamechangers. And while I DO love the NIV, I think that they got it wrong here. Issue #1 – Angels

- The word for angels in this passage is **"ben Elohim"** – And Ben means sons of. Elohim means God or Gods. The NIV translates this phrase angels, but "Sons of God" is better.
- Now, the first response to this is "Wait a minute! I thought Jesus was the ONLY son of God." And yes, that is true... the trinity is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus is exclusively the son of God in that regard.
- In the ancient Hebrew text, 2000 years before Jesus, the trinity was unknown. In this case, the "Sons of God" represent a group of sentient beings who were **God's inner circle**. They were like his cabinet. His Divine Council. Angels is too generic of a word. Because we know of at least three types of heavenly beings that are sentient, created by God, and have specific roles.
 - Cherubim are Protectors
 - Seraphim are "Fiery Ones" – related to serpent language
 - And Angels are Messengers
 - Each of these is assembled to have a hierarchy of leadership – Like Michael and Gabriel are archangels

- The Divine Council may have members from each of these OR other created beings. God could make it whatever he wants.
- So I want you to imagine God surrounded not by angels only, but by varied created heavenly beings. So far so good?
- OK, next language issue. The word for Satan in this passage is “hasatan” – Ha is a definite article... “THE”, if you will. And Satan means **Adversary or Challenger**. Today, we think of Satan as a personal name for the devil. But this was not the case in Job’s day. It was a role, or a job description. In this story is The Satan, the Adversary, or John Walton’s favorite. The challenger.
- I want you to look at **this timeline** to see how the development of the idea and naming of Satan happened.
- You’ll remember Job was written before Genesis. So the author could NOT be thinking about the serpent in the garden when writing this. There was no sense of a tempter, a destroyer, a fallen one at this point in the history of what God revealed. In fact, Satan as a name was not utilized until 2 Chronicles. 1000 BC. And this was not popularized until 200 BC and picked up by the gospel writers around 30-63.
- Then in Revelation, John ties the named Satan back to “that ancient serpent” – showing they are one in the same.
- However, none of them ever tie back concretely to hasatan of Job. The challenger.
- So, here is my proposal. I think if we read this passage with more accurate wordings, it makes a HUGE difference in how we understand it. You wind up with a character who is created by God – maybe an angel or cherub or seraph... but he has a specific job... he is the challenger.
- Every courtroom needs a prosecutor. Perhaps the role of the challenger is to challenge assumptions... challenge the status quo... set up ‘what if’ scenarios... prove that the way God said it is right or maybe wrong. This would not make him the dastardly evildoer, but a helpful member of the Divine council. Let’s reread with the names inserted.
- Oh, and by the way, the MEA translation listed here is the Mark Edward Ashton version. Basically, the NIV but changing the two words I mentioned...”to more accurately reflect the ancient Hebrew meaning”.

Job 1:6-12 MEA

One day the Sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and the Challenger also came with them. 7 The LORD said to the challenger, “Where have you come from?”

The challenger answered the LORD, “From roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it.”

8 Then the LORD said to the challenger, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.”

9 “Does Job fear God for nothing?” the challenger replied. 10 “Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. 11 But now stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face.”

12 The LORD said to the challenger, “Very well, then, everything he has is in your power, but on the man himself do not lay a finger.”

Then the challenger went out from the presence of the LORD.

Can you feel the difference as I read it with the key word changes? The challenger is a member of God's council. His JOB is to ask questions, find problems, and raise issues. If you have ever served on a leadership board you know that an effective board always has people who ask tough questions.

So go back and see what does the challenger say? "Stretch out your hand against him and he will curse you to your face." God KNOWS this isn't true because he is omniscient. He knows Job. But the council doesn't. you see the challenger is skeptical about humans. Their worship isn't real.... It is just an exchange of blessing for devotion. Job is not really loving God, he is just doing a business deal. And, if you are skeptical, God isn't really loved... he is just buying favor. No doubt the challenger inflicts major pain, but he does not need to be Satan or a demon to do so.

Alright, so let's look at Job 2 – already translated into the MEA edition.

Job 2:1-12 MEA

On another day the Sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and the Challenger also came with them to present himself before him. ²And the LORD said to the Challenger, "Where have you come from?"

The challenger answered the LORD, "From roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it."

³Then the LORD said to the challenger, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.

So far... exactly the same as chapter 1.

And he still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason."

⁴"Skin for skin!" the challenger replied. "A man will give all he has for his own life. ⁵But now stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face."

OK, so notice that round one of oppression was taking away his blessings. His fortune, his business, his kids, his respect. Kind of taking him from 100 to 0. But now, he is being afflicted. From 0 to negatives.

⁶The LORD said to the challenger, "Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must spare his life."

⁷So the challenger went out from the presence of the LORD and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head. ⁸Then Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes.

We find as time goes by that Job's disease is awful. It is a skin disease. He has pain every day. It is oozing and pussy. Later we find that his bones ache and he even has bad breath – chronic halitosis. Doctors have said different things about what he got. Some say black leprosy, some say Hpyerimmunoglobuline E, aka "Job's syndrome" some say syphilis. I just know it was bad.

⁹His wife said to him, "Are you still maintaining your integrity? Curse God and die!"

Oh, great, so now you take away all my kids, but leave me with Mrs Grumpy Pants! Now, just a word about Mrs. Job here. She often gets a bad rap, but remember... she has just lost ten kids too. And a fortune. And status. And now her husband is disgusting. She has a normal human response. Looks like the challenger should have picked on Mrs. Job. But her response is just very human.

¹⁰ He replied, “You are talking like a foolish^[b] woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?”

In all this, Job did not sin in what he said.

Similar to last week, Job maintains integrity. He stands on the fact that God is good and has the right to give whatever fate he chooses to humans. He knows nothing about this process in heaven, but trusts that God can do what God wants to do.

Now, can I just say this is hard? When you get a disease? When you are struggling with infertility... when you get a medical bill that you know is going to land you in the poor house. It is hard! Once again, Job is a model for us.

Important note: this is NOT the answer to why is there so much suffering. I have heard it said that the reason we are suffering is that God is making side bets on who will and will not curse him. That is not the point. There is a principle at work – in testing hypotheses about humanity and God. This situation creates a context for the dialogue of the rest of Job. But it would be plastic and two dimensional to think that this is normal stuff of heaven.

- We know that this is not the answer to why suffering exists because the scene shifts for 35 chapters to Job and his friends. Job and his friends debate without knowing any of this!
- Then in 38, God will give his answer and...It is also NOT God’s answer from the storm
- It is not a part of the resolution at the end. There is no flashback to heaven with an “I told you so” moment.
- What it does do for us is demonstrate that there is more going on than meets the eye
 - There is an upper story and a lower story
 - There is complexity that human beings know nothing about
 - It is real, but unseen – so don’t assume you know the whole story on
 - Not only in the heavens, but here on earth... there is more than meets the eye!

Defeated

Now, I cannot bring up all of this stuff about the enemy of our souls without doing a little teach about how you can be triumphant over him. I mean he is known as the prince of darkness and even the prince of this world. And there are many who tremble at his name. Many who serve him. Many who want to use his power for their own desires.

But you need to know that sin is always darker than it looks. Sin will take you further than you want to go. And it always costs more than you think. The evil one has a dastardly way of making sin look really shiny. Because he knows it drags you away from God and reduces your quality of life. It is what causes his diabolical chuckle.

But I am here to tell you that you do not need to fall prey to him. You can live under God’s protection and not fall into his ways. You don’t have to lie, to do porn, to boast about yourself, to abuse substances,

to hurt your spouse. (to spend into debt or do other things that dishonor God. You can live life to the full. Here is what the Bible says:

And in I John 5:18-19 he writes, ¹⁸We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the One who was born of God keeps them safe, and the evil one cannot harm them. ¹⁹We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

Because Greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world!

Now, this only works if Jesus is in you. Some of you are falling to the enemy because you are keeping Jesus out. Bad idea. Because without Jesus, humans just are not strong enough. But with Jesus, he is strong FOR us. Now most people are familiar with the historical reality that Jesus died a criminal's death on a cross. And that he historically, bodily, physically raised from the dead. These are just facts of history.

But some people don't know the spiritual battle implications behind all this. Here is what I mean. Not only did Jesus forgive sins by paying for them in blood, he also smashed Satan at the same time. He crushed the serpent's head and ground it into the dirt. At the same time, he took away the serpent's ultimate threat – death. Because when Jesus rose from the dead, he showed the death barrier could be broken and that he had the keys. And he is offering the keys to beating Satan and death to you. You don't have to live in fear, in addiction, in bondage to sin. You can really be free. You can experience freedom even while you're in the battle, but you may have to recognize that there is a battle in the first place in order to experience the victory

Music Starts

But you have to trust Jesus. I am just going to ask you to raise your hand high if you want to trust Jesus today. If you want the protection from the evil one that only he can provide. If you are looking for victory – not just behavioral management, but eternal, spiritual and inseparable victory over darkness and death, you can have it in Jesus. In fact, that is the ONLY way to have it. Do you want it?

If you are ready to trust Jesus today and move from darkness to light, from being far from God to being in his family... trusting in Jesus alone. Then I want to pray for you, but I want to see you first. Raise your hand if you want to say yes to Jesus today and be included in his family of light.

Hand Raise

Prayer