

Job

Knowing God in Pain



Lesson 1 ————— Job 1:1-12

The Match Made in Heaven

*... Have you considered My servant Job?
For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright
man, fearing God and turning away from evil. —Job 1:8*

A man known as "the greatest of all." The God of the heaven and earth. And Satan the Adversary. The Book of Job opens with an impressive and diverse cast of characters. The real-life drama unfolds in two scenes: the first on earth, the second in the throne room of heaven itself.

This week's scripture is one of those passages that at first reading seems to stir up more questions than it answers.

- Why does Satan have access to heaven and an audience before God Himself?
- Why does God allow Satan to roam the earth bringing evil and suffering instead of banishing him to hell immediately?
- Why would God become party to a dueling match with Satan, using his faithful servant Job as the prize?

The very existence and reality of Satan bring a flood of questions to our minds. The answers to some of these will become clearer as we study the Word together—others will not. The truth is God has not told us everything about Himself or His plan.

*The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed
belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.
—Deuteronomy 29:29*

Remember, the Bible is God's revelation of Himself to humankind—to you and me. Satan and his legion are only incidental to the amazing message of God's redeeming love. Rather than speculate about what we don't know, instead of wrestling with what we don't understand, we must keep our focus on what is certain—that God's love for us is unfailing no matter what the circumstances.

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
—Romans 8:38-39

Listen closely. The curtain is about to rise....

DAY 1

- 1) Read through Job 1:1-12 once without stopping.
- 2) Read the passage a second time more slowly, underlining or otherwise noting phrases that stand out in your mind or raise questions as you read.
- 3) Record five observations and five questions from your reading below.

Observations: (Things you consider important or interesting)

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Questions: (Things you don't clearly understand)

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DAY 2

- 1) Read 1:1-5. Using a dictionary, concordance, or commentary, write a definition for each of the four specific words/phrases used to describe Job's character.

Blameless:

Upright:

Fearing God:

Turning away from evil:

- 2) Write a description of Job in the following three categories.

Financially:

Spiritually:

Relationally (as a father):

- 3) Every godly man wants to be the spiritual leader of his family as Job was. Every godly woman longs for her husband to fill this important place in her heart and home. With all this wanting, most of us are pretty fuzzy on the details.

Read Genesis 18:19, Deuteronomy 6:4-9, and Ephesians 6:4. What instructions do you find for raising children in the way of the Lord? (NOTE: The related scriptures are printed out for you at the end of the lesson.)

- 4) Focus on Job 1:5, looking closely at Job's relationship with his children. How do you see Job living out the commands you read above? How do you see respect, love, godliness, and leadership demonstrated?

- 5) If Job lived in the 21st century, it's unlikely he would be making burnt offerings for his children after they spent a weekend vacationing together. Using your observations from scripture, write down a description of what spiritual leadership in the home should look like today. Be as specific as possible. Read Titus 2:3-5 and include the important role of women in this process.

Selah

Imagine God sitting on His throne, drawing the attention of the heavenly host to YOU. What four words do you think He would use to describe your character and lifestyle?

- 2) Was Job's "hedge" of protection something unique to him because of his righteousness, or can we be confident of God's protection and blessing in our lives as well? Look up Psalm 91 in your Bible and summarize what you discover. Look specifically for a description of who receives the Lord's shelter and care.

- 3) In verse 11, what specific sin does Satan assert he can make Job commit which becomes the central focus of the challenge between God and Satan?

- 4) What do you think it means to *curse God*? How does this act demonstrate prideful rebellion?

- 5) In verse 12, what does God permit Satan to do and what does He forbid Satan to do?

Selah

How we speak of God both in our hearts and in our conversation matters. It *really* matters. Are you guilty of cursing God, even in your "private" thoughts which are wholly known to your Creator? How do you speak of God to your spouse and children, your friends and loved ones, your neighbors and coworkers? Look for an opportunity to speak God's praise in each of these areas today.

DAY 5

Read through the EXPOSITION & EXPLANATION section that follows.
(We recommend that you do not change your original answers in Day 1 through Day 4, though you may want to add to them. Highlight or underline portions of the following reading that deal with lingering questions or touch on areas of special interest to you. You may want to discuss these in your small group.)

EXPOSITION & EXPLANATION

One of a Kind (1:1-5)

Job was famous long before the trials recorded in the Book of Job ever occurred. In chapter 1 he is described as *the greatest of all the men of the east* (vs 3). If Uz had a Fortune 500, Job was at the top. As remarkable as Job's possessions were, it was his extraordinary character that drew the attention of heaven and earth.

A Righteous Man

Three times in the first two chapters Job is described as possessing four qualities that define him as a righteous man.

Blameless (<i>purity of inner being</i>)	⇒	Upright (<i>purity of outward behavior</i>)
Fearing God (<i>worships God</i>)	⇒	Turning away from evil (<i>shuns evil</i>)

These qualities reflect the "poetry" or parallelism of ideas we see repeated throughout our study of wisdom literature. The description of Job as *blameless and upright* does not mean that he was sinless but refers to his spiritual maturity and righteous living.

A Family Man

Job's commitment to God resulted in a vital devotion to his family. His must have been a loving home; his ten children remained closely connected to one another even after reaching adulthood and setting up their own households. And they remained closely connected to their father; when Job called, every son and daughter came. The brothers took turns hosting banquets in their homes, inviting their sisters to join in the festivities. (*Let's hear it for the boys!*) Literally meaning a "house-feast" in Hebrew, there is no reason to imply that these family gatherings were marked by drunkenness or improper behavior.

When each brother had taken his turn, Job would call his children together so he could consecrate them, bringing burnt offerings before the Lord. While strange to our 21st century minds, this is a beautiful picture of a God-fearing man acting as the spiritual head of his home. Living before the time of Israel with its prescribed priesthood and sacrificial system, Job acted as priest for his family, standing before God on their behalf. Note that Job never forbids his children's gatherings, never accuses or interrogates them. He simply had that "gut feeling" of concern godly parents experience when their children are in a situation where temptation may overtake them—even sins of the heart. Job took every measure to influence his children toward godliness, vividly demonstrating God's authority and priority over every area of their lives.

Angels Among Us (1:6-7)

The book of Job now takes us into the throne room of heaven filled with a heavenly host. We are witnesses to a divine counsel between God and "the sons of God." From the context of the passage we understand that these beings have appeared to report before God as a matter of regular routine.

The Sons of God

The term "sons of God" (Hebrew *ben 'elohiym*) refers to angels. In the Old Testament they are more frequently called *malach*—the Lord's messengers.

What does the Bible tell us about angels?

—adapted from "Frequently Asked Questions" by Don Stewart

- 1) Angels are supernatural beings created by God (Ps. 148:2,5). They are distinct from humans and have been made above humanity in the created order during this present age (Heb. 2:7).
- 2) Angels were created to do the will of God. Presently, a central task of angels is to assist believers (Heb. 1:14).
- 3) Angels are spirit-beings by nature and have no physical form (Heb. 1:7, Luke 24:39). However, angels can assume bodily form at the Lord's command to perform specific tasks (Mat. 28:2).
- 4) Angels are not subject to death; they are immortal by God's power and design (Luke 20:36).
- 5) Angels do not marry, are neither male nor female, and do not propagate their own kind (Mat. 22:30).
- 6) Angels are not subject to the laws of nature, passing back and forth from the spiritual realm to the natural realm (Acts 12:7).
- 7) Two distinct types of angels, the cherubim and seraphim, are represented in scripture as winged creatures. However, the angels recorded as appearing to humans are not described as having wings.
- 8) The number of angels is innumerable (Heb. 12:22, Rev. 5:11).
- 9) Angels are personal beings with intelligence, thought, choice, and accountability. We know at least some have personal names, such as Michael and Gabriel. Angels are curious, desiring to know and understand God's plan of salvation for humankind (1 Pet. 1:12).
- 10) Created as sinless, holy beings, some angels used their God-given power of choice to rebel against Him. In doing so, these perfect beings abandoned the purpose for which they were created. They became the evil angels or demons found in the Bible.
- 11) The Bible offers no hope of salvation for these fallen angels. They will pay the price for their sin for all eternity.

Satan

Satan, the Accuser and Adversary, appears alongside this company of the *sons of God*. Notice from where Satan has come (vs. 7); *from roaming about on the earth and walking around on it*. Many people have the misconception that Satan currently resides in hell. While hell is a place prepared for the devil and his angels (Mat. 25:41), he is not there yet. The Bible tells us that in this present age, Satan is *the god of this world* (2 Cor. 4:4) and *the prince of the power of the air* (Eph. 2:2). Peter warns us, *Be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour* (1 Pet. 5:8).

This is just one of many misconceptions about Satan. To some, the idea of Satan, or the Devil, is an ancient myth—the stuff horror movies are made of. To others he is a substanceless symbol, a personification of all that is evil in the world. Yet in the opening chapters of Job we see Satan presented as a real being. From Genesis through Revelation, the existence of an intelligent, cunning personage who is the great archenemy of God is clearly taught. Satan is referred to in seven Old Testament books and nineteen New Testament books. Known by a number of different names, he is always treated as a real being—never a merely symbolic figure. In addition, we have the testimony of Jesus who asserted the existence of Satan at least fifteen different times as recorded in the gospels. Perhaps the strongest evidence was Christ's face-to-face confrontation with the Devil while tempted in the wilderness (Mat. 4:1).

Who is Satan? We can gain a basic, overall understanding of the identity of Satan or the Devil by tracing his inglorious history to his well-deserved destiny.

Note: The following is adapted from "Frequently Asked Questions" by Don Stewart.

1) The Angelic Creation

Originally this angelic being was created sinless, in one accord with God along with the rest of creation. (This was a separate creation from the creation of our world and humankind.) Scripture describes him as a high-ranking angel, but does not tell us his name.

2) The Fall of Satan

At some time in the dateless past, this angel decided to rebel against God. Filled with pride and selfish ambition, he took a large number of angels with him when he rebelled. When this occurred, he lost the favored position that he had with the Lord and among the angelic host. He was now Satan, the "Adversary."

3) Sin Enters Our World

Since the time of his fall, the rebellion has continued. The Devil remains at war with God. His primary objective is to turn people away from the worship and service of their Creator. We find him appearing in the Garden of Eden in the form of a serpent. There he tempted Adam and Eve to sin. His temptation succeeded and sin entered our previously perfect world.

4) Defeated by Christ

As soon as sin entered our world, the Lord promised to send Someone to deal with the problem. Two thousand years ago, God the Son became a man in the person of Jesus

Christ. Satan attempted to thwart the mission of Christ, but without success. The Devil was defeated by Christ—first on the cross and then at the resurrection.

5) Present Interval: Authority on Earth & Accuser in Heaven

Presently we are in an interval period between the two comings of Christ. While defeated at the cross, Satan's final judgment is yet in the future.

- On earth Satan continues to deceive and torment humanity. The Bible teaches that Satan has significant authority over our world. He is the *prince of the power of the air* and *the god of this age* that blinds the minds of unbelievers. He is the leader of an army of evil spirits that are constantly at work against God and His people. However, Satan's current position of authority is temporary and limited by the power and plan of God.
- In heaven Satan brings accusations against God's children day and night. Christ, our great high priest, continually makes intercession for us.

6) Final Days

In the last days, Satan will be cast out of heaven and will bring great suffering and tribulation on earth. When Christ returns, Satan will be bound and placed in the pit, or the abyss, for a thousand years. At the end of this period, he will be released for a short period of time to deceive humanity for one last time. After this final deception, Satan will be once-and-for-all finished causing sin in our universe.

7) Ultimate Judgment

At the Great White Throne judgment, Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire, where he will be punished forever and ever without end. This is his ultimate destiny.

Winds of War (1:8-12)

Since the time of his fall, Satan has continued to wage war against God. The devil's battle plan has remained virtually unchanged for millennia, since that fateful day in the garden. The primary weapon in Satan's arsenal—the only means by which this fallen creature can inflict pain on the Almighty God—is to turn humanity away from the worship and service of their Creator.

Can you begin to see in your mind's eye what is really taking place in these verses of Job? Satan comes to make a report before God, undoubtedly desiring to replay every sordid, prideful, rebellious act of every man, woman and child on the face of the earth for the sole purpose of rubbing it in the face of Almighty God.

His message is obvious: *I rejected you, God. And all these pitiful people you made reject you too. Love them all you want—they still won't choose to love you.*

This time God turns the tables, drawing the Adversary's attention to His faithful servant Job. Clearly Satan has heard of this righteous man and has likely devised plans to ruin him in the past. Consider his fierce complaint about the "hedge" of protection God has set about Job on every side (vs. 10). It is comforting to know that this watchful care was not special treatment unique to Job. Scripture teaches that every child of God is under His watchful eye

and mighty shelter. Satan cannot touch us unless God permits it. And if He permits it, it will be for His purpose and glory.

Cursing the Face of God

Satan accuses Job of loving God only for what he gets out of it. He challenges God to bring affliction into Job's life, asserting that in the grip of pain and suffering Job will curse God to His face. This becomes the focus of the contest in heaven: *Will Job curse God or not?*

What does it mean to curse God? In this context the Hebrew word *barak* means to renounce, to abandon, to dismiss from the mind, to attribute evil to.

The next sentence has to rank among the most terrifying in all of Scripture. *Behold all that he has is in your power* (1:12). Read those words once again slowly. God only restrains Satan from putting his hand on Job himself.

An Act of Betrayal or Honor?

God places awesome and terrible power into Satan's hands—not because He does not love Job but because He is confident in Job's love for Him. God knows He can give the orders to send this righteous soldier to the front lines of the heavenly battle, to that place where the risk of casualty is highest, and he will gain a victory that will reverberate throughout time. Where is this place of such intense spiritual danger? The place of affliction.

The primary purpose of Job's suffering, unknown to him, was that he should stand before men and angels as a trophy of the saving might of God.