***Job: A Study in Suffering…And Faith***

**Answers to Study Questions**

Lesson Two: Prologue

Text: Job 1:1 – 3:26

Lesson Objectives:

1. Be able to describe the character of Job.

2. Have a clear understanding of the background of Job’s suffering.

1. **Describe Job’s character.**

He is described in 1:1 as a man who was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil.

God noted for Satan's benefit that there was “none like him on the earth” (1:8, 2:3).

**Job 1:8 (ESV)**

**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?”

**Job 2:3 (ESV)**

**3** 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? He still holds fast his integrity, although you incited me against him to destroy him without reason.”

Notice Job's concern for the spiritual welfare of his family--he offers sacrifices **in case** his sons have sinned (1:4-5).

**Job 1:4–5 (ESV)**

**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. **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.

1. **What reason did Satan assign to Job’s devotion and piety?**

**Job 1:9–11 (ESV)**

**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 to your face.”

He suggested that Job was serving God only because he had been blessed by God. In other words, Job served God because he had been “bribed” by God’s blessings (“Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side?” – 1:10; perhaps a reference to the hedge typically existing around a vineyard).

Satan portrayed Job’s devotion as a self-serving thing. While the charge presented Job in an unflattering light, it also had implications for God Himself!! Is God worthy to be served for Who He is…or must He “bribe” man to receive his worship and service? What is the motivation for OUR service?

**Job 2:4 (ESV)**

**4** Then Satan answered the Lord and said, “Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life.

The expression “skin for skin,” used in 2:4, may imply that Job was willing to sacrifice his children for continued blessings from God. Or perhaps Satan’s comment was meant to imply that Job was willing to see his children destroyed as long as calamity did not befall him.

Note Jackson’s comment: “The patriarch is accused of selfishness. He has willingly traded the lives [skins] of his livestock, servants, and yes, even his children (thus feigning devotion to God) in order to preserve his personal welfare.” [22]

Note: the word translated “for no reason” (1:9) and “without reason” (2:3) is the same Hebrew word. Was God “throwing Satan’s charge” back in his face?

1. **What do we know about “Satan” from his conversations with God?**

Satan has limited power. He is evidently powerless to afflict man without God's permission (Job 1:12 [notice the restriction]; Luke 22:31; John 10:28-29; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:9). He accuses God of making a hedge around Job, his household and all of his possessions, suggesting that Satan was unable to touch Job in any of these areas.

**Luke 22:31 (ESV)**

**31** “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat,

**John 10:28–29 (ESV)**

**28** I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. **29** My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.

**James 4:7 (ESV)**

**7** Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

**1 Peter 5:9 (ESV)**

**9** Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

**1 Corinthians 10:13 (ESV)**

**13** No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

Satan is thus not a divine being. If he were deity, he would have limitless power.

Satan was spending his time going to and fro on the earth. I suspect he continues to do so. It also appears (though not conclusively) that this confrontation between God and Satan did not take place on the earth.

Satan is an accuser; the name “Satan” is actually a transliteration of a Hebrew word meaning “adversary” and sometimes translated as a proper name (Job 1-2; Zechariah 3:2; and 1 Chronicles 21:1), sometimes not (Numbers 22:22,32; 1 Samuel 29:4; 2 Samuel 19:22; 1 Kings 5:4; 11:14,23,25; Psalm 109:6). He does not rejoice in Job’s faithfulness. He also impugns God's character.

Satan has a low opinion of men (1:11; 2:4). Remember his comments about Job.

1. **What was Job’s reaction to the first round of testing? The second round?**

He worshiped God. He accepted that the things had happened to him and his family, but he did not charge God with wrong even though he believed that God was the agent of his misfortunes (1:20-22; “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away”). Neither was Job charged with sin although He had incorrectly assigned his calamities to the Lord.

Job’s reaction to the second round of testing was similar to the first. He refused to follow the counsel of his wife (who undoubtedly was suffering also, if not to the same extent), even rebuking her for her suggestion (2:10).

**Job 2:9–10 (ESV)**

**9** Then his wife said to him, “Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die.” **10** But he said to her, “You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?” In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

Job’s later rash speech should be viewed in light of his initial reaction in which he exhibits a strong devotion to God.

1. **What was the reaction of Job’s wife to his suffering? The reaction of his friends?**

Job’s wife counseled him to “curse God and die” (same word as in 1:5). She may have said what she did out of sympathy — “Job, you are already in disfavor with God. Say ‘goodbye’ to God and perhaps He will finish you off mercifully.” Ellison (27) suggests that the advice of Job’s wife is really an extension of the idea that suffering is wholly because of sin. She reasoned that since Job was suffering greatly, he must have sinned greatly and was cut off from God. To “curse God” would not worsen his relationship, but might bring death and relief from his temporal suffering!

It seems that Job’s wife is perhaps not the noble character that he is. Job probably held the same idea about the source of suffering that she did (thus his consternation with God), but he refused to “say goodbye” to God!

The friends, first of all, travel some distance to be with Job. When they arrive, each one tore his robe and sprinkled dust upon his head. They sit with him in complete silence for seven days and seven nights, a time period characteristic of mourning for the dead (Jackson, 24; see also Genesis 50:10 & 1 Samuel 31:13). They came with the purpose of mourning with him and comforting him. They are also probably shocked at Job’s condition in view of their previous opinion of his character.

*“Cursed God” [בָּרַך (bārak) - asd] is too strong an expression for the meaning intended here. It is not blasphemy, or defiance of God, or malignant hatred of His service that he feared. The word is properly a formula of blessing used in taking leave of friends. It is commonly translated “bless.” and is the same that is employed where it is said, “And Laban kissed his sons and his daughters, and blessed them, and departed” (Gen. 31:55). “So Joshua blessed them, and sent them away” (Josh. 22:6); that is, he took leave of them, he said farewell to them, he bid them adieu. Job was afraid that his sons might have said farewell to God in their hearts; that they might have taken leave of Him; that in their thoughtless hilarity they might have forgotten God and His presence, and acted as though they were out of His sight.* (Green, pp. 23-4; commenting on 1:5).

1. **Briefly summarize the three parts of Job’s soliloquy. How was the expression of Job’s anguish similar to that of the prophet Jeremiah (Hint: see Jeremiah 20)**

Job’s soliloquy:

1) He cursed the day of his birth (3:1-10).

2) He asked why he did not die at birth (3:11-19).

3) He asked why he was not allowed to die. He would welcome death, but it did not come (3:20-26).

Jeremiah also cursed the day of his birth (Jeremiah 20:14-18).

**Jeremiah 20:14–18 (ESV)**

**14** Cursed be the day on which I was born! The day when my mother bore me, let it not be blessed! **15** Cursed be the man who brought the news to my father, “A son is born to you,” making him very glad. **16** Let that man be like the cities that the Lord overthrew without pity; let him hear a cry in the morning and an alarm at noon, **17** because he did not kill me in the womb; so my mother would have been my grave, and her womb forever great. **18** Why did I come out from the womb to see toil and sorrow, and spend my days in shame?

**Additional Discussion Questions:**

1. **Who actually struck Job with the various calamities that befell him?**

**Job 1:12 (ESV)**

**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.

God told Satan, “All that he has is in your hand” (1:12). As a result, Job lost his possessions and his children were crushed in a house that collapsed due to a great wind. In 1:16, one of the messengers of calamity mentions the “fire of God” falling from heaven, but he is probably suffering from the same delusion as Job – if it represents power, God must have done it!

**Job 2:6–7 (ESV)**

**6** And the Lord said to Satan, “Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life.” **7** So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and struck Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.

In 2:6, God placed Job in the hand of Satan with the restriction that Satan could not take Job’s life. Job 2:7 clearly states that it was Satan who struck Job with boils. It seems fairly clear that although God gave His permission, it was Satan who actually struck Job.

Note that Job assumes that God is responsible for all that happened to him (1:21; 2:10). Of course, Job was not privy to the conversations which transpired between Satan and God. Actually, the truth is that God was only indirectly responsible; He allowed Satan to strike Job.

1. **Can one be wealthy and yet serve God acceptably? Support your answer.**

Obviously Job did so. He was “the greatest of all the people of the East” (1:3), an obvious reference to his material wealth. Yet note his piety and God’s estimation of him.

Note Job’s claims for benevolence: 29:12-17; 31:16-23.

**Job 29:12–17 (ESV)**

**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.

**Job 31:16–23 (ESV)**

**16** “If I have withheld anything that the poor desired, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail, **17** or have eaten my morsel alone, and the fatherless has not eaten of it **18** (for from my youth the fatherless grew up with me as with a father, and from my mother’s womb I guided the widow), **19** if I have seen anyone perish for lack of clothing, or the needy without covering, **20** if his body has not blessed me, and if he was not warmed with the fleece of my sheep, **21** if I have raised my hand against the fatherless, because I saw my help in the gate, **22** then let my shoulder blade fall from my shoulder, and let my arm be broken from its socket. **23** For I was in terror of calamity from God, and I could not have faced his majesty.

Abraham was also a rich man (Genesis 13:2) and yet he served God acceptably and is used as an example of faithful obedience (Romans 4; Hebrews 11). David was also a rich man.

**Genesis 13:2 (ESV)**

**2** Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold.

The problem is not wealth per se. Note the instructions of Jesus to the rich young ruler (Matthew 19:16-26; see also 1 Timothy 6:10). Any problems stem from the use of wealth and/or the attitudes created in people by the possession of material wealth. That fact is also illustrated by the parable of the rich farmer that Jesus told; the farmer’s problem was not his riches, but his attitude toward them (Luke 12:13-21).

**1 Timothy 6:10 (ESV)**

**10** For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

**Applications?**

1. **Reaction to suffering**