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

Lesson Two: Prologue

(Job 1:1-3:26)

***Objective(s):***

1. Be able to describe the character of Job.

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

1. **Introduction to and testing of Job (1:1 - 2:13)**
   1. The righteous man Job (1:1-5)
      1. Job is presented as a man of outstanding spiritual character. He is described in a fourfold manner: one who was blameless, upright, feared God and turned away from evil.
      2. Job regularly offered sacrifices for his children lest any of them had “cursed God.” To completely appreciate Job's concern for the spiritual welfare of his children, please note the following comment by Green:1
         1. *“Cursed God” 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.*
      3. This description of Job is especially important in light of later charges by Job’s three friends.
   2. The wealthy man Job (1:1-5)
      1. Job was blessed to the extent that he was the greatest of all the people of the East.
      2. He had ten children.
      3. It is the blessings of Job that serve to highlight his later poverty and suffering.
   3. Confrontation in heaven (1:6-12; 2:1-6)
      1. In the first confrontation of Satan with God, Satan charged Job with possessing a self-seeking piety.
         1. Satan contended that if Job was deprived of his material blessings, he would cease to serve Jehovah.
         2. Jehovah granted Satan the power to take away all that Job had, but restricted him from harming Job’s person.
      2. In the second confrontation, when faced with Job’s faithfulness, Satan claimed that Job would renounce the Lord once his actual person had been affected.
      3. It should be noted that:
         1. Satan apparently had no power to afflict Job until he was allowed by God.
         2. Satan, even in his desire to tempt and destroy, actually served the purposes of God.2
   4. The testing of Job (1:13-22; 2:7-8)3
      1. Deprivation of material goods
      2. Loss of family members
      3. Loss of health
         1. Commentators suggest that Job’s disease may have been elephantiasis, a very severe form of leprosy.4 Elephantiasis is sometimes known as black leprosy because the skin is blackened.5
         2. Whatever the disease, it seems clear that Job suffered with it for some time and that it was quite serious and uncomfortable. Some of its symptoms/effects can be deduced from the following passages: 2:7-8, 12; 3:24-25; 7:4-5, 13-15; 19:17, 20; 30:17-18, 30.
         3. The “ashes” mentioned in 2:8 is a reference to the place outside a village where dung and other waste would be dumped and periodically burned. It is quite likely that Job took up his place there because his malady made him unwelcome in the company of others.6
   5. The reactions of Job's wife and friends (2:9-13)
      1. It seems that Job's wife is not the noble character that he is. She admonishes him to “say farewell to God” and die (see the quotation in A, 2, a).
      2. Ellison 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!7
      3. Job’s three friends come and sit down on the ash heap with him in silence for seven days. Seven days was a common mourning period for the dead (Gen. 50:10; 1 Samuel 31:13) and this may be some indication of their feelings about his situation.8
2. **Job’s soliloquy (3:1-26)**
   1. Job cursed the day of his birth (vv. 1-10). In a variety of ways, he expressed the wish that he had never been born.
   2. In the second section of his speech, Job continued by saying that if he had to be born, it would have been better if he had been stillborn (vv. 11-19). Death is pictured as a release from the troubles of this life.
   3. Job finished his soliloquy by suggesting that he would welcome death, but it did not come (vv. 20-26).

**Endnotes:**

1William Henry Green, *The Argument of the Book of Job Unfolded* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Klock & Klock Christian Publishers, 1979), pp. 23-4.

2Green, pp. 61-4. 3Jackson, pp. 22-3. 4Jensen, p. 30.

5Edgar Gibson, *The Book of Job* (Minneapolis: Klock & Klock Christian Publishers, 1983), p. 10.

6H. L. Ellison, *A Study of Job* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), pp. 26-7.

7Ellison, p. 27. 8Jackson, pp. 24-5.

***Study & Discussion Questions:***

1. Describe Job’s character.
2. What reason did Satan assign to Job’s devotion and piety?
3. What do we know about “Satan” from his conversations with God?
4. What was Job’s reaction to the first round of testing? The second round?
5. What was the reaction of Job’s wife to his suffering? The reaction of his friends?
6. Briefly summarize the three parts of Job’s soliloquy.

**Additional Discussion Questions:**

1. Who actually struck Job with the various calamities that befell him?
2. Can one be wealthy and yet serve God acceptably? Support your answer.