



Job

When Life Goes Wrong

Jan to Feb 2017

Introduction

The problem of suffering is not only a stumbling block for non-Christians, but many of us are haunted by this possibility.

- How does the book of Job help us to understand the wisdom tradition (Law & Prophets, e.g. Deut. 28)?
- If such calamities can fall on Job, who is “blameless and upright,” what will become of us?
- Death of a missionary in 2013 (and its impact on me)

Background

Date: 2000 – 200? B.C.

Place: The story probably happened very early on around the time of Abraham (ref. Uz, Chaldeans).

- However, the penning of the book may be around the exile with a good knowledge of wisdom poetry, the identification of “the satan”, etc.

Outline ^[1]

1. Prose Prologue (chap 1 & 2): the cynic's taunt
 - The satan suggests that the religion of the prosperous, e.g. Job, is sheer self-interest, permission granted to test Job.
2. Poetic Dialogue (3:1-42:6): the sufferer's outrage, the moralists' bias, and the LORD's high wisdom
 - Job's lament (chap 3)
 - Three rounds of speeches by Job's comforters (Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar), punctuated by Job's protests, etc.
 - Elihu, the young man, interrupts (32-27)
 - The LORD speaks and enlarges Job's horizon (38-41)
 - Job bows to his divine Lord's will (42:1-6)
3. Prose Epilogue (42:7 – end): Job is vindicated and restored

Prologue: A Story of Righteous Suffering

Read Job

- 1:1–5 The setting
- 1:6–11 The Challenge – Round 1
- 1:12–19 Calamities
- 1:20–22 Job upholds his confidence in God

The Challenge – Round 1

1. Job was a man *blameless and upright*. He is “God-fearing” and therefore, shuns evil.
2. God is pleased with him. “Job had an ideal family of seven sons and three daughters, both numbers and their sum being symbols of completeness, a clear token of divine favor.” [2]
3. Job would even sacrifice on behalf of his children, just in case. He was a (their) priest.
 - Could he do any better?

The Challenge – Round 1

4. One day [v.6] the angels gathered in the heavenly court. Satan (“the satan” accuser or adversary) was there.
 - “the Hebrew treats the word Satan here not as a name but as a common noun ... to indicate the place he is allowed to occupy in the total scheme of things.” [3]
5. Satan challenged God about Job, or was it the other way?

The Challenge – Round 1

- Job is God’s “test case to show the satan (and would be mockers of true religion) that mortals do serve God out of pure love for His person and not because what they get out of their obedience.” [4]
- “It reflects the consistent practice of God where we might wish to argue that omnipotence ought to stamp out evil at tis first appearance, God’s chosen way was not to crush it ... but to wrestle with it ... he is resolved to overcome it in fair combat, not by veto but by hard-won victory.” [5]

[4] Kaiser, Walter, “A Biblical Approach to Personal Suffering.” Moody, 1982, p.127.

[5] Kidner, Derek, “The Wisdom of Proverbs, Job & Ecclesiastes”, IVP 1985, p.56-57

The Challenge – Round 1

6. The satan's challenge: Job worships God because he wants God's blessings.
 - Job's lament, what does he see?
 - If God takes away the material blessings from Job, he will "curse your to your face".
 - The satan accused Job of believing in a "prosperity Gospel."
7. The Satan is given permission to take away Job's blessings. God sets the limit. It's all in his control.
 - How comfortable are you with God's protection?

The Challenge – Round 1

8. Job's Response

- What was going through his mind as he receives the news of the death of all his children, loss of properties, and fire from heaven (1:16)?
- “The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away, may the name of the LORD be praised.” (1:21) ... read v.20
- Was it too easy for Job? Was the satan right about Job “Skin for skin, ” it hasn't touched him yet? (2:4)

Reflection

1. Is it fair for God to use Job (or others) as an example of true worshippers? Why?
2. How can the teachings of Proverbs reconcile with the reality of “righteous suffering”?
3. Do you think Job ever understood what happened to him?