

The Book of Job

Chapter 1

1:1-5 Prologue

1:1 “*In the land of Uz*” The land of Uz is mentioned here, and then only two more times in the Bible, (Jer. 25:20 & Lam. 4:21). It was possibly located in what would now be southern portion of the country of Jordan, or in northern Saudi Arabia.

Job was “*blameless and upright.*” Does this mean that he was perfect? Of course not. The rest of the verse goes on to describe what was meant by “*blameless and upright*”—“*he feared God and shunned evil.*” In other words he strived, to the best of his earthly ability, to faithfully follow God. Although he wasn’t perfect, we might view him in the following ways:

- A tabloid newspaper wouldn’t be able to “dig up any dirt” about him.
- He would easily pass an FBI/CIA background check.
- He could run for President of the U.S. without fear of *anything* embarrassing coming out about his past.

Psalms 19:13 also helps explain this:

“Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then I will be blameless, innocent of great transgression.”

1:2-3 Job was blessed with both a large family and abundant possessions. He was the wealthiest person “*of the East,*” probably meaning what we would consider to be the Middle Eastern region today (Israel, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, etc.). Job describes his life in the following words:

“When I went to the gate of the city and took my seat in the public square, the young men saw me and stepped aside and the old men rose to their feet; the chief men refrained from speaking and covered their mouths with their hands; the voices of the nobles were hushed, and their tongues stuck to the roof of their mouth.” (Job 29:7-10)

Job proves that it’s possible to have both great wealth and great faith, but he’s the *exception* rather than the *rule*:

Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 19:23)

1:4-5 After the various periods of feasting (perhaps celebrating birthdays, anniversaries, harvests, etc.) Job would “sanctify” his children, perhaps calling them to repent of anything improper that they might have said or done while their inhibitions were loosened while drinking during the feasts. Then, Job would offer ten burnt offerings to God, “prayers of smoke,” asking God to look with favor and love upon his children. See:

Let my prayer be counted as incense before you, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice! (Psalm 141:2)

Job serves as an example to all parents to regularly “lift up their children in prayer” to God.

1:6-22 Job’s First Test

1:6 “*Now there was a day when the sons of God* (NIV “angels”) *came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them.*” That God has “councils” or “assemblies” of his sons, his angels, isn’t surprising. One of several such references to these assemblies is:

Let the heavens praise your wonders, O LORD, your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones! For who in the skies can be compared to the LORD? Who among the heavenly beings is like the LORD, a God greatly to be feared in the council of the holy ones, and awesome above all who are around him? (Psalm 89:5-7)

Satan “The Accuser” is also a “son of God” an angel, but one who rebelled against God. Satan didn’t appear to be invited to this assembly of angels, but just “*came among them.*” In his arrogance, he intruded. Satan desires to have the power of God, and thus felt comfortable coming to an assembly where God was presiding.

1:7 “*Where have you come from?*” God knew, and Satan knew that God knew, what he was up to and where he had been. God’s question was something like that of an attorney questioning a witness. The attorney already knows the answer to the question he asks, but he wants to get that answer into the public record.

Satan, in front of the true God, answers with the truth, but with just a *portion* of the truth. The “whole truth” is expressed by St. Peter:

Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. (1 Peter 5:8)

1:8 The LORD then presents to Satan one of Satan’s failures—Job, who has resisted Satan’s great temptations and has remained an outstanding example of faith and faithfulness.

1:9-11 Satan, as the Father of Lies, responds by saying that Job is only faithful because of the wealth that God has provided Job with.

In verse 10, Satan says, “*You have blessed the work of [Job’s] hands...*”



Satan Departs from the Presence of the Lord
William Blake, 1825

If Satan is allowed to take away Job’s wealth, Satan says that Job “*will surely curse [God] to your face.*” It’s interesting (to me, anyway) to note that the same Hebrew word can be used for “bless” and “curse.” The meaning is determined by the context in which the word is found.

1:12 God then allows Satan to test Job’s faith by taking away everything he has, but not yet allowing Satan to harm Job himself. Then, as now, Satan’s power is limited—he can’t go beyond what God will allow.

1:13-19 Just as it is evident that Satan can do nothing without God’s permission, it is equally

clear that the devil’s power is vastly superior to man’s. The Adversary is able to manipulate Sabean and Chaldean raiding parties. He can send down lightning, “*the fire of God*” (1:16) upon Job’s sheep to consume them.

Satan is also able to control the wind (a tornado or sirocco?) which destroys the house with Job’s children. No human being is able to duplicate or withstand such power. We can’t help being awestruck by the power of the Adversary. In the words of Luther’s hymn we are reminded:

*The old evil Foe now means deadly woe
Deep guile and great might are his dread arms in fight;
On earth is not his equal. (LSB 656:1)*

Luther also wrote in his Large Catechism:

“The devil causes endless contentions, murders, rebellions and wars; also tempest and hail to destroy the crops and the cattle; he poisons the air, and does like deeds. In short, it is painful to him that anyone receives a piece of bread from God and enjoys it in peace, and if it were in his power, and God through our prayers did not restrain him we should verily not have a stalk in the field nor a penny in the house, yea, not even our life for an hour; especially those who keep God’s Word and endeavor to be Christians.”

(From the Explanation of the Fourth Petition.)

This doesn’t mean that *all* storms, tornadoes, etc., are the direct result of Satan—most are the result of natural weather patterns. However, we occasionally see those “freak” storms and destructive weather systems that meteorologists didn’t predict and can’t explain. These may indeed be the result of Satan’s demonic influence, as were the storms that afflicted Job.

In the end, however, we return to the realization that the devil can do only what God allows him to do to test and strengthen our faith.

1:20-22 In one day, Satan takes away almost all of Job’s wealth, including his most precious possession—his children. “*Then Job arose...*” It was only after the report of the death of his children that Job reacted. However, he didn’t react as Satan has predicted. Rather than *cursing* God, Job *worshipped and praised* God. Job was definitely mourning—he tore his robe and shaved his head—but in his grief he was thankful that the LORD had provided him with wealth and children, even though the wealth and children were now gone.

Nevertheless, it is one thing to *understand* something about suffering, and quite another to *endure* it. That’s what we’ll look at through the rest of the Book of Job.

Many religious books and televangelists (e.g. *Kenneth Copeland, Paul Crouch, Marilyn Hickey, Benny Hinn, T.D. Jakes, Joel Osteen, Robert Tilton*) stress the material success Christianity is supposed to bring in this life. What’s dangerous about this non-Biblical emphasis?