

Now Mine Eyes

Seeth Thee

**Biblical Studies From
The Book of Job**

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"Now Mine Eyes Seeth Thee"

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Lesson 1 - General Introduction

Overview

The principle theme of the **Book of Job** is the suffering humans endure. At times it is unexplainable. When one is in the same predicament as Job, having lost everything (possessions, children, the support of family and friends), it is a true test of faith and confidence in God. Sadly, it often leads the sufferer to question God, His power, and His providence. It may even cause doubt as to whether God really controls all that happens, and whether or not He even cares about those who suffer. The story of Job shows us what it is like to try to harmonize the pains we bear with the knowledge of an all-powerful, all-wise, and all-loving God.

"Suffering is universal; it knows no respect of persons. The source of suffering is from three realms:

Nature - only a fraction comes from this quarter.

Other persons - most suffering is inflicted from this source.

Self - that which we inflict upon ourselves through carelessness, the violation of moral, spiritual and physical law, whether knowingly or in ignorance."

(Homer Hailey, *A Commentary On Job*), p. 24.

Out of our pains comes "the dilemma of God." What is His disposition towards those who suffer? Does He care? Can He do anything about it? Doubt and blame often arise on the part of the sufferer towards God, and he begins to rationalize that if God really loved him, He would not permit calamities to happen.

Another question sure to surface when one who attempts to serve God suffers hardships is why do the godly suffer when all the wicked around him seem to prosper? This will rock the faith of any child of God, and occupies his mind until he can find a solution. Some of the Psalms deal with this (**cp. Psa. 37, 73**), and Job wondered this as well. We will also ponder on this in our own sufferings.

Behind all the discussions between Job and his friends is something else we cannot afford to overlook. It is the basis upon which Satan argued to God when the book begins. If we examine it and think about it long enough, it really shows itself in the form of two questions:

- 1) **"Does Job fear God for nothing?" (1:9)** - Satan argues that the only reason Job fears and serves God is for pay, or for something God will give him. If this is true, then what Satan is really saying is *can God trust any man* to serve and love Him when there is no pay or reward, or better still, when suffering comes upon such a man?
- 2) **Can man trust God when he is suffering for no apparent cause?** - This seeks to shatter man's faith in a God that is loving, caring, even nurturing. Can man continue to believe in God when situations are not pleasant, and he does not know why he is suffering?

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Any doubts we may have are some of Satan's primary tools to get us to quit serving God. Questions that arise from such doubts will no doubt challenge us, but they will also insult God. Like Job, if we have doubts and even question God, His purposes and control of life, we must not give in to sin by blaming all our troubles on God (**Job 1:22; 2:10**). In the end, it is the man who walks by faith and not by sight that realizes Satan's trap, and will not fall into his snare (**2 Cor. 5:7**).

The Man

Job is characterized as a good man, one who was "blameless, upright, fearing God, and turning away from evil" (**1:1**). Not only did he possess good morals, but he was spiritually pure and concerned about the spiritual welfare of his children (**1:5**). Also, his faith wasn't "on again, off again", but the habitual, continual living of a pious servant of God (**1:5**).

Job shows himself to be of the character desired by the Lord Himself in **Mt. 5:44-48**. Job's three "friends" (Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar) prove themselves to be no friends at all (**cp. 16:2**). Not only did they offer no real help, they came with their prejudiced judgments and only added to Job's heavy heart. Yet, in the end, Job not only proves his worthiness to God, but also on behalf of these men (**42:10**).

The Purpose

The principle purposes of The Book of Job can be summarized as follows:

- ♦ To disprove the theory that man's sufferings are always proportionate to his sins. This is demonstrated by the continual insistence of Job's companions that he was guilty of some sin, by Job's continual objection throughout their speeches, and by God's final vindication of Job. Jesus disproved this same theory in **Jn. 9:1-3**.
- ♦ To remind us that God does have higher purposes in life for His children. Because His ways are higher than our own (**cp. Isa. 55:8-9**), we will experience difficulties in our attempts to understand all that happens to us. At last, it will only be through faith that we come to understand and appreciate all that God plans for us. In the end, Job comes to realize that God does not need man's advice in controlling the world and that no amount of suffering gives us the right to question God's wisdom or justice.

Ironically, the answer to Job's problems was already on his lips in the beginning of the book: "...Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD" (**1:21**); and "Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" (**2:10**).

- ♦ To show how man's faith is tried and made complete (**cp. Jas. 1:2-4**). Initially, Job passes the test when he rejects his wife's counsel to "curse God and die" (**2:9**). But as we know, life can deliver some devastating blows, and Job soon saw his troubles multiply. Having to endure his own attempts at rationalizing his plight and having to hear the condemnations of his "friends," Job eventually learns what he could not have known had he not suffered and his faith not been tested (**42:2-6**). Job's faith was made perfect.

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The Book

The Book of Job is presented in the form of several dialogues or speeches, and can be divided using the following general format:

- Job 1-3** This section contains the dialogue between God and Satan regarding Job, Job's losses, and Job's consequent lament about himself & his condition.
- Job 4-31** This section contains the dialogue between Job and the three "friends" (Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar) as well as Job's complaints.
- Job 32-37** This section contains the speech of Elihu, the youngest of those in the debate over Job's condition.
- Job 38-42** This section contains the reply of God to Job and the others, Job's repentance, and Job's restoration.

The Historical Setting

Many Bible students agree that the setting for Job is in the time of the patriarchs, possibly even in the days of Abraham and Melchizedek. During these days the desert was man's home, and one of the gauges of his prosperity was his flocks & herds. In his commentary, Homer Hailey offers some points we believe are worthy of consideration when trying to determine the dating of the book of Job:

- ♦ Job's large flocks, herds, and a great number of servants reminds us of the days of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc.
- ♦ The Chaldeans and the Sabeans are represented as roving marauders who fell upon Job's flocks and herds, carrying them away. Both of these became strong nations at a later date, thus arguing for an early date for the story about Job.
- ♦ Job offers sacrifices for his children (1:5), fulfilling a priestly function characteristic of the patriarchal age.
- ♦ A unit of money (*kesitah* or *qesitah*) of unknown value, mentioned in 42:11, occurs only here and in Gen. 33:19 (repeated in Josh. 24:32). This might further indicate Job lived in the patriarchal age.

- *Commentary On Job*, pp. 18-20.