

Job 1.1-2.10

Introduction

Prov 25.2 It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out.

Throughout history man has sought to understand and explain everything.

- In pre-scientific age did it by reasoning and religion/superstition -
> the righteous prosper (reward), the wicked perish (punishment) –
Deut and Wisdom

BUT 'why do good people suffer'? – only cope by assuming that all not as it seems, i.e. they are not so good after all.

The modern age has tended to assume that every problem has a solution – given sufficient research and resources (esp. money) to solve the problem.

Book of Job explores:

1. the mystery of the righteous suffering: no simple explanation such as "the righteous prosper..."
Suffering is not a problem to be solved: it is a mystery, in the face of which we are required to trust God.
2. The challenge of faith: "Job's faith does not relieve his suffering, it makes it worse, To some extent it causes it."
No good God: no problem. The problem is squaring faith in a good God with suffering, i.e. theodicy
3. The mystery of God – his inscrutability; his silence; his at times apparent contrariness, arbitrariness, unpredictability and injustice

It exposes:

1. The inadequacy of some of our preaching: don't know what going on in heaven; indeed right that can't fathom everything.
2. The inadequacy of some of our pastoral care: How we support those who suffer/be a friend to them

"And though at the end of the day the book brings us back to the all-sufficiency of divine grace... there is a long, painful and arduous path to climb before we hear the Lord speaking, as he does at the end of the book, from the whirlwind." (Atkinson)

1.1-2.10

1.1-5 The righteousness and blessings of Job

1.6-12 Satan's challenge and YHWH's response

1.13-19 Job loses everything except his health

1.20-22 Job's response: "he did not sin or charge God with wrongdoing"

2.1-8 Satan pushes the envelope and God allows him to test Job further

2.9-10 Job's wife

Job in vv. 1-5

1. Is not an Israelite, and nothing Jewish about book except YHWH: no reference to Israel, temple, law or covenant, Patriarchs or prophets, judges or kings, or Hebrew scriptures.
2. If Uz to be understood literally, probably from Edom (Lam 4.21), the descendants of Esau.
3. But Job believed in the God of Israel (1.21 LORD/YHWH 3x). Passed down from Esau? But in the speeches God is referred to by the names known to ancient Semitic-speaking people - *'el*, *'eloah*, and to the Patriarchs – *shadday*
4. Definitely no later than exilic, 570BC (when Ezek. ministry ceased) - Ezek 14.14, 20 where listed with Noah and Daniel as righteous (though not the biblical Daniel). And, post-exilic date most unlikely if Job is an Edomite (see Obadiah 10); bad enough he's non-Jewish.

Patriarchal-period provenance for the book are:

1. The evidence for Job's wealth is measured in the abundance of animals he possessed (1.3)
 2. He acted as a priest for his family (1.5 cf. Gen 12.7f.)
- The summary of his life and description of his death and age (42.17) = similar to Abraham (Gen 25.8).
 - 'blameless' – derived from verbal root *t-m-m*, signifying completeness, wholeness, as in a sacrificial animal which is without blemish. Not sinless, but not a hypocrite (Belcher)
 - 'upright' – root *y-s-r* meaning 'straight', signifies faithful adherence to what is right, true, honest, including a just treatment of others (Belcher)

- 'fears the LORD' = piety but also living according to God's design, turning away from evil
- God calls Job 'my servant' (v.8) – like Abraham, Moses and Joshua
- He does not choose evil, rather evil 'comes upon him' (2.11)

NB. All this will be affirmed by YHWH himself (cf. the 'wisdom' of Job's friends)

- Greatly blessed by God – children and wealth
- Constantly functioning as a priest to his family (2.8)
- That Job is singled out by God, twice: "There is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and righteous man who fears God and turns away from evil" (1.8;2.3) puts him above all others, even Jews. Even Noah (Gen 6.9) and Abraham (Gen 22.12) are not described as fulsomely – something which rabbinic tradition seeks to correct/overturn, making Abraham more righteous than Job (see the Testament of Abraham 15:14-15, c.100 AD)

'the Satan/accuser' in vv.6-12

- indicates a particular office in the heavenly court as the definite article not usually used (outside Job, only Zech 3.1-2). NT confirms Satan = devil
- the satan is presented as an outsider to the heavenly court, additional to the heavenly council
- his role is to seek out/stir up trouble – "roaming to and fro on the earth, and walking up and down on it" cf. 1 Peter 5.8
- He attacks the integrity of Job's faith
- also effectively an attack on God: is he worthy of being worshipped for who he is, not just what he gives to/does for humans . God has set a hedge around Job, guarding him from misfortune. Does God not have confidence that he is worthy of worship apart from the blessings he bestows? "Is God intrinsically worshipful?" (Janzen)
- Is proven wrong. The first test is the wager, and he lost. Second test is a desperate attempt to break Job

God in vv.6-12

- He is the one who initiates the discussion about Job
- He takes full responsibility for Job's plight and will never blame it on Satan, even though he is never the author of suffering and sin (James 1.13, 17; 1 John 1.5)

Job's calamities in vv. 13-19

All happens on the birthday ("his day") of the eldest, the eldest son. No other day more significant in marking the gift of life and blessing.

4 messengers

4 disasters – in ascending order of gravity, representing agricultural interests -> pastoral interests -> trading interests -> children

From 4 directions: south (Sabeans) -> heaven (fire) -> north (Chaldeans/Babylonians) -> great wind from the east

In one day loses everything of value except his wife

Job in 1.20-22

4 acts of Job: tears his robe -> shaved his head -> prostrated himself on ground -> worshipped

Speaks:

- How we respond to suffering depends a lot on how we view God and this life. If all we have comes from God, and belongs to him (we simply stewards) no reason why he shouldn't take it away
- "Naked I came..." = traditional wisdom saying – Eccl 5.15; Sir 40.1.
- To this traditional wisdom saying, Job adds his own theological assertion: "The LORD has given, the LORD has taken away; let the name of the LORD be blessed." i.e. God is worthy of praise whether he gives or takes away. ANSWER TO SATAN
- Passes first test with flying colours

Satan in 2.1-8

Having lost original wager, seeks to up the stakes.

God in 2.1-8

God does say in 2.3 "... though *you incited me* against him, to destroy him for no reason". Raises a theological question: can God be incited? Cf. can God be persuaded to repent/relent?

God expresses incredible faith in Job. Cf. 1 Cor 10.13

Job's wife

- Delitzsch quote: Job has lost his children, but his wife he has retained, for he need not be tried by losing her: he was proved sufficiently by having her.
Unlike Job, she is 'normal' in her response
- note that she too has lost her children and possessions
- Job's response suggests she is speaking out of character, presumably trying to offer sympathy/pity – a way out of his misery.

Job's response

- In response to his wife: doesn't call her a fool, but says she is speaking like one, i.e. speaking out of character. Calls her to a better perspective (Belcher).

The specific questions these 2 chapters raise:

1. About Job's (man's?) faith?

- Does Job fear God for nothing?
- Is there such a thing as disinterested piety?

Faith = trust in *who* God is, not what we think he does

Job not so much about why the righteous suffer, but how they suffer.

2. about God's character:

NB. GOD not on trial,;prologue sets stage for epic poem and how Job and friends will respond to Job's suffering.

As with a parable, not every element conveys theological truth cf. Luke 19 parable of 10 minas

Such questions as:

- Does he 'use' Job in wager with Satan?
- Can he be manipulated by Satan?
- Does he really care about Job?

Job has been stripped bare "for no reason" (2.3) other than that God has been provoked by Satan... It is not Job's sin that merits divine reprisal. It is rather Job's righteousness that makes him the target for a divine gambit." (Balentine)

= out of order.

Answers to these questions must be looked for elsewhere in scriptures.

BUT Is God intrinsically worthy of worship, i.e. even when he doesn't bless, but plays the enemy? = pertinent as that = Satan's question and point of test.

Conclusion

Book of Job is not the last word on suffering, or God, or the Satan – NT, Jesus – John 9 (God's glory), Heb 12 discipline etc.

- God – does test – Luke 22.31-34

³¹ "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. ³² But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

³³ But he replied, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death."

³⁴ Jesus answered, "I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me."

Matt 14.22ff

Jesus sent the disciples away onto the water to be faced with a storm.
This kind of testing isn't because of sin, but is a part of God's purpose for us – forming us as his disciples

Heb 12.3ff - to discipline and purify faith, but not beyond ability

- God not manipulated by Satan. Has defeated him
- God does not tempt to sin
- Satan – the enemy, to be resisted

Facing up to suffering: suffering is part of not only the human but the Christian condition: Rom 8.16-17:

The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, *provided we suffer with* him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Jesus is the last word on suffering: God was *in Christ* reconciling the world to himself – not detached, playing games.

One day no more suffering, sickness, death... Rev 21

Suggested Discussion Questions

1. What has been your previous understanding/experience of the Book of Job? Have you ever read it right through? If not, what put you off it? If you have, what did you make of it?
2. What questions do you bring to this series on Job? (I would appreciate any feedback)
3. Apply Satan's question "Does Job fear God for nothing?" to Christians today. To what extent, and in what sense, do we see Christian faith dependent upon what believers consider to be the benefits of being a Christian? E.g. you might consider such things as why people fall away; the prevalence of the 'prosperity gospel' in some quarters of the Church?
4. In your own walk with Jesus, when have you been tempted to 'give up on God'? (Most of us have!) Why/what was the temptation? What prevented you giving up?
5. The loss of all his worldly goods didn't shake Job's faith, rather it caused him to confirm God's sovereignty over everything. To what extent do you consider everything you have, including your children, to be God's, to dispose of as he wills?
6. Job worshipped and praised God in spite of his calamities. How important is worship in keeping us going through hard times? How does it help guard our faith?