

2022-09-30: The Book of Job

Objective

- To know the story and basic structure of the book of Job
- To take the example of Job

Key Verse

- "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You" (Job 42:5)

Body

Introduction

- Job is considered to be one of the Poetic books of the Old Testament (along with Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Wisdom, Sirach)
- He lived after Abraham, but before Moses
 - We know because his friend Bildad the Shuhite is from the sons of Shuah (son of Abraham by Keturah)
 - No mention of Aaronic Priesthood, Mosaic rites
 - No mention of Exodus
 - Mention of Creation, Fall of Adam, Flood, Sodom and Gomorrah
 - He lived 140 years which is atypical for Moses time
- 42 Chapters
- Job was righteous
 - "blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil" (Job 1:1)
 - He was blameless, but he knew that. And this led to self-righteousness and pride. ("I am blameless, yet I do not know myself; I despise my life" (Job 9:21)
- God allowed Job to be tempted by the devil in some extreme ways, to help Job work through his pride, and to defeat Satan
 - Possessions - he lost all of his wealth
 - Children - his children all died
 - Bodily Disease - he was struck with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head
 - His friends - the devil used them to move him in the wrong direction. They all came to try and comfort him, but their worldly comfort had the opposite effect.
- Structure:
 - Chapters 1-3: Job is tempted
 - Chapters 4-14: First Debate
 - Chapters 15-21: Second Debate
 - Chapters 22-31: Third Debate
 - Chapters 32-37: Elihu the Wise

- Chapters 38-42: The Lord speaks to Job
- The Book of Job asks a very important question: Why do bad things happen to good people?
 - This question is the pinnacle of Atheism and we should know how to give a good answer for it
 - The Atheist will say:
 - If God is all-loving and all-powerful then He will not allow any evil or pain or suffering to happen in the world
 - But the Atheist falls into the same pitfalls as Job and his friends here
- We will act out the story of Job, then we will discuss this question - Why do bad things happen to good people?

Skit

Characters:

- Job
- Eliphaz the Temanite
- Bildad the Shuhite
- Zophar the Naamathite
- Elihu

First Debate

Job: My friends, I am so glad that you came by to comfort me.

Eliphaz: Job, I had no idea you looked so awful. What in the world did you do for God to do this to you?!

Job: I did nothing. I am totally innocent.

Eliphaz: Yeah right... if you were innocent, this wouldn't have happened to you. But look at you, your sons are crushed and dead. Your possessions are completely gone. God is the one who does great things - who gives rain and water and children and prosperity. You DEFINITELY did something.

Job: If only God would take my life, so that I no longer have to feel this pain! But as for you - you call this coming to comfort me? What does your arguing prove? You want to rebuke me? Then show me my mistakes! What did I do wrong to deserve this?

Bildad: Look Job, I think what you need to do is ask God for forgiveness. I mean if your sons sinned, then they got their reward. But you're still here so ask God to forgive you! God is the one who holds the whole world in his hand!

Job: That I can agree on. God is almighty. I am amazed at the wisdom of God that would allow a righteous person to suffer. I am blameless, yet I do not know myself.

Zophar: You're all talk! You want to be vindicated? Stop talking - everything you're saying is foolish. You're a liar! Oh (*mockingly*) "my doctrine is pure and I am clean in the eyes of God" - get out of here. What God has done to you is less than your sin deserves.

Job: Here I sit, being mocked by my friends. I, who call on God and God answers me. I, who am just and blameless - and I am ridiculed. I am as wise as you. I know that the Lord holds all of the world in his hands. (*praying*) Lord, I ask of you just two things - do not withdraw Your hand from me. And do not let me be afraid of You. Call out to me and I will answer. Or let me speak and then You respond to me. Make me know my transgressions and my sin.

First Debate Summary:

- Job's friends argue the following:
 - God is just
 - Therefore, God runs the whole world in a perfectly just way
 - Therefore, Job sinned and is being punished
- Job is arguing the following:
 - God is just
 - But Job is blameless and has not sinned
 - Therefore, God's justice in the world is not as black and white as we think
 - But still, Job does not deserve to be punished

Second Debate:

Eliphaz: Is this conversation even worth my time? This is absolutely pointless. Who do you think you are? I'm telling you what all the elders have told us, and what I have seen with my own eyes. The WICKED lives in pain; he dwells in desolate cities; he will not be rich; he hungers. The WICKED.

Job: You are all terrible comforters! Not one of you is wise! Lord, please give me relief.

Bildad: You think WE are stupid?! You're the one tearing yourself in anger and not understanding us. The wicked loses everything. He lives in darkness. He lives in terror. He lives without shelter. He is surrounded by traps and destruction. These are the dwellings of the wicked and this is the place of him who does not know God.

Job: How long will you torment me with your words? Aren't you ashamed of how you're treating me? No. I know that my Redeemer lives.

Zophar: But Job, haven't you seen it yourself? Haven't you seen how the wicked in this world live? They don't live happy and joyful lives. They live in misery! We've all seen it.

Job: I'll tell you what I have seen. I have seen that the wicked live and grow old and even mighty in power. I have seen that they have many children and descendants. I have seen that their houses are safe from fear. I have seen that their livestock and their animals reproduce. I have seen that they sing and dance and spend their days in wealth. Even though they reject God. How often does a wicked person live in darkness? How often does destruction come on them? Can anyone teach

God knowledge? How can you comfort me with empty words that are full of lies and falsehood?

Second Debate Summary:

- The friends are telling Job of their experience of wicked people having bad things happen to them
- But Job tells them the truth - good things happen to bad people, a lot.
- We see it in our lives:
 - Someone who doesn't know God, and finds themselves rich and famous. But someone who loves God, and finds themselves poor.
 - Or someone who doesn't know God and is living in good health, but someone who loves God and serves Him, and finds themselves with cancer.
 - Someone who doesn't know God, and has many children, but someone who prays to God with their whole heart to have just one child, and they don't get pregnant.
- If we ask "Why do bad things happen to good people" - then we also ask "why do good things happen to bad people?"

Third Debate:

Eliphaz: Why should God even care if you are righteous, or if you make your ways blameless. What do you think, that because you fear Him, he brings judgment on you?! That makes no sense. Your wickedness is great. Your iniquity has no end. You probably made people swear to you. You probably took clothing from someone who needed it. You probably didn't give water to the thirsty, or food to the hungry. You probably sent widows away empty and hurt orphans. You are so far into your sin that you can't even see it.

Job: My complaints are futile. If only I knew where God was, so that I could go and present my case to Him. Then, at least I would know His answer to me. Then He would take note of me. I cannot see Him, He is not here. He knows my way - I have kept His way, I have kept His commandments, I have treasured His words. But others on earth have been violent - violent on others, on animals, and even on the land - and yet they are not charged with wrongdoing. And if I'm saying something wrong, which of you will prove me to be a liar?

Bildad: How can any man be righteous? God has all dominion and fear. No one who is born of a woman can be pure.

Job: No matter what, I will not forsake God. I will not speak wickedness. I will keep my integrity. Where does wisdom come from? From God! The fear of the Lord is wisdom, departing from evil is understanding. As I was in the days of my prime, when I had everything and people would come to me for wisdom and for help - even people older than me. But now even the ones younger than I am come and mock me. My wealth has been turned into poverty.

If truly I have sinned, then let God's justice come upon me, but let it be weighed on honest scales. It's not fair.

If I have looked at a woman in lust, then let others bow down for my own wife.

If I have mistreated my male or female servant, or taken from the poor, or raised my hand against an orphan, then let me arm fall off my shoulder.

If I have put my trust in gold, or rejoiced in my wealth, or stolen food or money from someone, then let thistles grow instead of wheat, and weeds instead of barley.

Third Debate Summary:

- Job is questioning God's fairness. He admits that if he has sinned, he needs to be punished, but doesn't think his punishment is fair.
- What about the people who murder? Or the people who rob the widows? Those who are committing violence in the world and their punishment is not as severe.
- "The words of Job are ended. So these three men ceased answering Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes. Then the wrath of Elihu was aroused against Job; his wrath was aroused because he justified himself rather than God. Also against his three friends his wrath was aroused, because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job." (Job 31:40-32:3)

The Fourth Friend: Elihu

Elihu: Since I am younger than all of you, I waited before speaking. And I listened to all of your words. So now you listen to my words. Job, I heard you saying many times: "I am pure, without transgression; I am innocent, there is no iniquity in me. Yet God finds occasions against me and counts me as His enemy." Look, Job, in this you are not righteous.

Who are you to contend with God? How can you say whether or not God counts you as an enemy? Don't you realize that we should all be delivered to the Pit?

Self-righteousness is in itself sin! God is good and He loves everyone - the righteous and the wicked - equally. He shows no partiality to anyone.

Conclusion

- After everyone had spoken, God Himself spoke to Job through a wind
- God explained to Job that He holds the whole world in His hand, and that executing justice in the world is not as easy as he thinks. It's complex. Job doesn't see the bigger picture that God sees. Job sees a miniscule slice.
- God asks where Job was when He was forming the foundations of the world, or the sun and moon and stars. God reminds Job that He is the one who stops the sea from approaching on the land, tells the sun when to come up, brings snow and hail in the winter and rain in the summer, etc.
- God asks what Job knows about the animals - when does a deer or a wild mountain goat give birth? How many months should it be? What about a wild ox? Will he serve you? The strength of a horse
- Job repents and listens to what the Lord says to him
- Then the Lord restores to him all of his losses. He got the same number of sons and daughters, and double all his possessions. And He gave him a long number of days.

Lessons

Lessons from Job

- Do not give up - the Lord is with you
- Trust that all things are in God's hands
- Live a life of integrity and honesty and righteousness - no matter your circumstances
- Look for the future eternal reward

Lessons from Job's Friends

- When your friend is hurting or going through something difficult, give them good comfort

Why do bad things happen to good people?

1. Who are good people?
 - "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23)
2. What are the bad things?
 - Sin that comes from man
 - Can we blame this on God? God has given free will to all people. When people sin against each other, this cannot fall on the shoulders of God
 - Natural Disaster
 - Nature does not discriminate good or bad - a fire might be warm to someone (favorable) and uncomfortably hot (unfavorable) to others.
 - Hurricanes are uncomfortable for Floridians, but they have ecological benefits in tropical environments. The rain gives a needed boost to wetlands and flushes out lagoons to remove waste and weeds. The winds move sediments from bays into marsh areas to revitalize the nutrients, etc. They help to balance the heat in the atmosphere.
 - But even Natural Disasters are a result of the Fall of Man
 - "For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now." (Romans 8:22)
 - Illness
 - Illness is also a result of the Fall of Man
 - However, God may use it for good
3. Why might God let a "bad thing" happen to someone
 - Suffering might be a warning to avoid future sin
 - Suffering might be an opportunity to have faith in a difficult time and to be rewarded
 - Suffering might be to widen your perspective about something or someone and push you to repent
4. Can we always know the reasons for suffering?
 - No - but what we know is that God uses all things for good.
 - "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28)

Application

- This week, let us remember the "bad things" and give thanks for them
 - Let us give thanks to the Lord in faith, for the Hurricane that came on us
 - Let us give thanks to the Lord in faith, for the illnesses and diseases of our loved ones

Contemplation

Lord, we cannot stand before You and compare ourselves to Job - Your righteous and faithful disciple, who lived a life of love and sacrifice for You. And even Lord in his hardship and tribulation, in his temptations, he loved You. And yet we falter at the slightest inconveniences. I consider if I have said an evil word in traffic because I was inconvenienced by a few seconds. I consider if I have fallen into anger simply because of a common cold. I consider all of my sins O Lord before You, that were not worth the time or the effort that we put into them and yet we consider them small or insignificant, while falling short of Your glory. I ask You, O Lord, to give me the repentance and righteousness of Job that I may live my life in faith and in the trust that all good things come from You and that You will use all things for good.

Resources

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