

March 2023

## **What's the Point...of Job?** **Mark Garner**

*In Job, we leave the narrative books, as we see Job and his friends trying to make sense of the disastrous events that have befallen him. The opening scene involving God and Satan is just the prelude to the core part of the book, which discusses some of the questions that we often ask when we are afflicted or troubled or distressed. As we take in the different perspectives, we can see some of the differences between God's thoughts and human thinking.*

### ***Our Redeemer Lives (Overview Of Job)***

After facing a heartrending series of events, Job asks the natural question, Why? (Job 1-3). Even if Job had been aware of the discussion between God and Satan, he would have asked the same question. He is very sad and confused, and all he can do is to worship and praise God. Three of Job's friends come to comfort him and show their sympathy.

Soon they begin discussing what has happened, and they raise some questions that arise in any era (Job 4-25), including the possible reasons for suffering, what God wants from us, what constitutes righteousness, and more. Yet at the center of the lengthy discussion is whether Job has done something to cause his suffering. Each of Job's friends begins with good intentions, yet each of them also has some noticeable misunderstandings of our Heavenly Father.

They say some similar things, yet to some extent they can be seen as representing basic viewpoints. Eliphaz is a rationalist and is generally kind, yet he sees God as largely impersonal, and he advises Job to be obedient to God and things will be fine. Bildad is a theologian who has a misplaced confidence in human teachings and conventional wisdom. Zophar can be unkind; he is a moralist who is certain that Job has done something to deserve his suffering, and presses Job to confess.

Yet in Job's despair, he most of all wants to continue to live in God's presence and know God more closely. Job is sure that his Redeemer lives (19:23-27), and that he will see him; while he makes some inaccurate statements, he is focused on what matters most, his relationship with God.

As the discussion continues (Job 26-37), Job raises the question: where does understanding dwell? He and his friends are aware that it comes from God, yet Job has more of a sense of reverence for God, as he realizes that in this world we can see only the outer fringes of God's majesty and care. Then, after Job's thoughts on where wisdom is found (ch. 28), we meet Elihu, a skilled speaker who has some good thoughts, yet Elihu is a "clanging cymbal" without love.

Now God speaks 'out of the storm' (Job 38-42). God's exposition is full of wisdom, grace, and understanding. It is often misperceived as scolding or rebuking Job, yet it is meant most of all to reassure Job of what most concerned him, that God heard him and understood what he was going through. Our Heavenly Father reminds Job that he provides for all of the living creatures; though this doesn't directly answer Job's questions, it reassures Job of deeper truths that comfort him.

Job is comforted by being with his Redeemer, as our Redeemer comforts us too. The epilogue clarifies that in spite of his despair Job understood some important basic truths about God, while his friends' thoughts were misguided. Everyone comforts Job, and he has a new family, yet most of all he is reassured that God was with him in his sufferings.

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## **What's the Point...of Job? Caleb Dillinger**

If you're not familiar with the Bible, you might see this book and wonder, "What's a whole book of the Bible have to say about work?" A friendly reminder: the Old Testament books of the Bible were predominantly written in Hebrew (other parts are Aramaic, which is similar to Hebrew). In that language, "o's" only have a long sound...so it's pronounced "Jobe".

Anyway, this book of the Bible is highly misunderstood, misapplied, and yet infinitely valuable to today's society. It centers on the story of a righteous man named Job. He is incredibly faithful to God, so much so that the tempter, Satan (Satan means "the accuser/the tempter") complains to God that the only reason Job is righteous is because God blessed him with many children, bountiful lands and cattle, and all sorts of earthly blessings. Satan argues that Job would be faithless with real pain in his life. God thinks otherwise and allows Satan to take away Job's earthly blessings.

Job loses his children, his lands, his physical health. He's emotionally, relationally, and physically suffering. Then along comes three friends who tell Job this is all his fault, and if he just stopped sinning then God would make things better again. Job protests that he is innocent! They debate for chapter after chapter until finally God shows up and settles the argument.

This book is long, but most people tend to read only chapters 1-3 and 38-42. Those are the parts where Satan and God are talking and Job gets afflicted, and the part where God shows up to answer the four arguing men. The book contains so much more to learn from, but not in the usual "the Bible tells me so" sort of way. Mainly, chapters 4-37 reflect reality - spiritual people who WIDELY miss the mark.

One friend argues that Job sinned against God and that's why he is being punished. Make no mistake, there is truth to sin has consequences and that God may choose to discipline his people. But not all bad things are punishments, and not all sin leads directly to punishment. Job knows he is innocent, but unfortunately his spiritual friends think otherwise, judging Job for things he never did.

There are so many reasons to read Job today. For one, it teaches us what NOT to do when someone suffers. Don't judge them, don't explain their suffering, and don't pretend you have all the answers. Further, the book teaches that righteous people and wicked people suffer. Living on this earth with sin as a reality means anyone can suffer! God doesn't send all suffering and pain. There isn't a "reason for everything". Sometimes Satan does bad things. Sometimes bad things happen. Sometimes God punishes. It's not always equally divided between those three things.

But the main point of reading Job is to realize that we are small and God is big. Your suffering is terrible - but don't think the Great God of the heavens doesn't care simply because he isn't acting. God, who has always been there, knows what he is doing. Trust in God to handle it. Our God is big and involved in our lives. That's the point of reading Job.