

“Does Job Fear God for Nothing?”



SABBATH—OCTOBER 8

READ FOR THIS WEEK’S LESSON: Job 1; Job 2; 1 Corinthians 4:9; Genesis 3:1–8; Philippians 4:11–13; Matthew 4:1–11; Philippians 2:5–8.

MEMORY VERSE: “Job replied [to his wife], ‘You are talking like a foolish woman. We accept good things from God. So we should also accept trouble when he [God] sends it.’ In spite of everything, Job didn’t [did not] say anything that was sinful” (Job 2:10, NlrV).

THE BOOK OF JOB opens up to us a whole new possibility of what is real. It helps us to understand the great controversy (war between Christ and Satan). And by doing so, it helps us better understand the world that we live in, a world that so often puzzles and even frightens us. But the book of Job also shows that this great controversy is not just someone else’s fight or that we have nothing to do with it. If only it were true; but, unfortunately, it is not: “ ‘But how terrible it will be for the earth and the sea! The devil has come down to you. He is very angry. He knows his time is short’ ” (Revelation 12:12, NlrV). Satan has come down to the earth and to the sea. And we know for ourselves that Satan’s anger is very great. Who among us humans has not felt that anger?

This week we will continue to study the first two chapters of Job as we set out to get a greater understanding of how we fit into the great controversy as it continues to boil over.

GOD'S SERVANT, JOB (Job 1)

Read Job 1. Pay attention to Satan's charges against Job. What is Satan saying? What is suggested in his attacks? In the end, who is Satan really attacking?

“Haven't [have not] you guarded him [Job] and his family? Haven't [have not] you taken care of everything he has? You have blessed everything he does. His flocks and herds are spread all through the land' ” (Job 1:10, NIV). The book of Job opens by pointing to Job's perfect character (thoughts; feelings; actions), his possessions, and his large family. These things cause people to respect Job as “the greatest of all the men of the east” (Job 1:3, NASB). And these, too, are the things that Satan throws in God's face. Satan claims that Job serves God only because God has made Job great.

Satan's charge is that if God were to take these things away from Job, Job would “surely curse You [God] to Your face' ” (Job 1:11, NKJV). What is suggested by Satan's charge? The attack, really, is an attack against God Himself. (This is what the whole great controversy is about anyway.) If God were so wonderful, so good, then Job would obey and fear and worship Him out of love and appreciation alone. After all, who would not love a God who had done so much for him or her? In a sense, Satan is saying that God has all but bribed Job into being faithful to Him. So Satan claims, Job serves God not out of love for God but out of his own selfish reasons.

Think about some of the most terrible and hateful political rulers who have faithful friends, loyal to the death, because these rulers were good to them. If the Lord really were kind, loving, and caring, Job still would serve the Lord no matter what. But by claiming that Job would not stay faithful, Satan suggests that even Job does not fully trust God and that Job is loyal only because of what God has given him. That is, in the end (according to Satan) Job's loyalty depends on whether it is a good business deal for him.

Why do you serve the Lord? Suppose your reasons are not perfect. If you had to wait until your reasons were perfect, then what might happen to you and your faith?



Satan claims that Job served God not out of love but only because of what God had given him.

SKIN FOR SKIN: THE BATTLE CONTINUES (Job 2:1–3)

The act of Christ dying for the salvation of humans would make heaven reachable for people while the whole universe watched.

DEFINITIONS

1. idiom—a saying that cannot be understood from the meaning of its separate words or from each word alone but that has a separate meaning of its own. For example, “A penny for your thoughts” is an idiom that is used as a way of asking what someone is thinking.
2. redemption—the act of saving people from sin and evil. Jesus paid the cost of our salvation with His life by dying on the cross.

Job 2:1–3 begins by retelling some of what already has happened in Job 1:6–8. The main change is the last part of Job 2:3, where the Lord Himself talks about how faithful Job has remained. Job remains so, even though many bad things happen to him. So by the time we get to Job 2:3, it looks as if Satan’s charges have been proven false. Job stays faithful to God and does not curse Him, as Satan says he would.

Read Job 2. What happens in these verses? Also, what is so important about the fact that in both Job 1 and 2 these “sons of God” are there to witness the talks between God and Satan?

The wording “skin for skin” is a special kind of saying known as an idiom.¹ This idiom has puzzled Bible thinkers. But the idea, or meaning, of the idiom is this: let something bad happen to Job’s own person. And this will cause Job to show where his loyalty really lies. Ruin Job’s body, his health, and then find out what happens.

It also is interesting to note or point out that Satan is making his charges “publicly.” He does so before heavenly beings (angels; people). This idea fits in perfectly with what we know about the great controversy. It is something that is going on before the whole universe. (Read 1 Corinthians 4:9; Daniel 7:10; and Revelation 12:7–9.)

“But the plan of redemption² had a deeper meaning than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth. It was not just that the people of this little world [earth] might honor the law of God. It was to clear up the name and character [who God is] of God before the universe. . . . The act of Christ in dying for the salvation of humans would make heaven reachable for people, and it would do so while the whole universe watched. It would show that God and His Son were fair in their dealing with the rebellion [war] of Satan. It would establish the law of God forever. And it would show the nature and the results of sin.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs [Forefathers and Leaders] and Prophets [Special Messengers]*, pages 68, 69.

BLESSED BE THE NAME OF THE LORD (Job 1:20–22)

After Satan’s first attack on Job, the news comes to Job about all the terrible events that have happened. How does Job answer? (Read Job 1:20–22.) What is so important about the fact that Job “sinned not, nor charged [blamed] God foolishly”?

Important to God’s government, a government based on love, is freedom of choice. God wants us to serve Him because we love Him. He does not want us to feel forced to serve Him. “Satan suggested that Job served God from selfish reasons. . . . Satan tried to claim that true religion does not come from love and an appreciation of God’s character. However, true worshipers love religion for its own sake—not for reward—and they serve God because such service is right in itself. They do not do so because heaven is a place where they receive glory [praise and honor]. They love God because He is worthy of their affection and confidence, and not just because He blesses them.”—Adapted from *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 3, page 500.

In the book of Job, Job proves Satan’s charges wrong. God knows what will happen, but Job still could have acted differently. He could have sinned. He could have “charged God foolishly.” Job is not forced by God to act as he does. His loyal faithfulness is a wonderful example before humans and angels.

Compare³ what happens in Job 1 to what happens with Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:1–8. How does the big difference make Adam and Eve’s sin appear so terrible?

Adam and Eve are sinless in a truly perfect place. But they fall into sin because of Satan’s attack. Job goes through great pain and suffering, but he stays faithful to the Lord despite Satan’s attacks. In both cases, we have a powerful example of the great issues in connection with free will.⁴

How does Job’s reaction (answer) here show us how cheap, easy, and false our excuses for sin often can be?



God’s government is based on freedom of choice.

DEFINITIONS

3. compare—show how two or more things are the same or different.

4. free will—the ability to choose freely between right and wrong and good and evil.

JOB'S WIFE (Job 2:3, 9)



In her grief, Job's wife pushes Job to do exactly what God says Job will not do: curse God. What a lesson she is to us all about how careful we must be not to cause others to do wrong.

This is probably as good a time as any to talk about another person who is harmed and injured by all that happens in the story of Job: his wife. She appears only in Job 2:9, 10. After that, she vanishes from the story and from history. We are told nothing more about her. But thinking about all that happens, who could imagine the grief that this poor woman goes through? Her upsetting situation in chapter 1 shows how great suffering is all around the world. We are all involved in the great controversy. No one escapes.

Compare Job 2:3 to Job 2:9. What wording is used both by God and Job's wife that is nearly the same? And what is the importance of how they both use it?

It is no coincidence that the same wording about Job's "integrity" (faithfulness) appears in both verses: The word translated "integrity" comes from the same word used in Job 1:1 and Job 1:8. It often is translated "blameless." The root word itself gives the idea of "completeness" and "fullness."

How unfortunate that Job's wife becomes someone who challenges Job on the very thing for which God praises him. In her grief, in her sorrow, Job's wife pushes Job to do exactly what God says he will not do. We certainly cannot judge her, but what a lesson she is to us all about how careful we have to be in order not to cause others to do wrong. (Read Luke 17:2.)

Read Job 2:10. What powerful testimony (witness about God) does Job give here? Read also Philippians 4:11–13.

Job shows that his faith is strong and true. He is going to serve the Lord both in the good times and in the bad. But what is interesting is that Satan now disappears from the story. He does not appear in it again. And the verse does not mention his reaction, but we can imagine Satan's disappointment and anger about Job's faithful response (answer). After all, think about how easily he tricks Adam and Eve and so many others. The "accuser of our brethren [Satan]" (Revelation 12:10) is going to have to find someone other than Job to trick and blame.

How do we learn to be faithful to God, both in the good times and in the bad?

OBEDIENCE UNTO DEATH (Matthew 4:1–11)

Job 1:22 reads: “In spite of everything, Job didn’t [did not] sin by blaming God for doing anything wrong” (Nlrv). Job 2:10 reads: “In spite of everything, Job didn’t [did not] say anything that was sinful” (Nlrv). In both cases, even in spite of Satan’s attacks, Job stays faithful to the Lord. Both verses point to the fact that Job does not sin, either with his actions or with words.

Of course, the verses do not say that Job is not a sinner. They would never say that, because the Bible teaches that we are all sinners. “If we say we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar. His word has no place in our lives” (1 John 1:10, Nlrv). Being “honest” and doing “what was right,” respecting God and avoiding evil (Job 1:1, NKJV), does not make a person sinless. Like everyone else, Job is born in sin and needs a Savior.

Bad events still happen to Job. But despite all that comes upon him, he remains faithful to the Lord. In this sense, in his own way Job could be seen as a kind of symbol, a small example of Jesus (see lesson 14). Jesus goes through terrible trials and temptations. But He does not give up. He does not fall into sin. So He proves Satan’s charges against God to be false. Of course, what Christ does is so much bigger, greater, and more meaningful than what Job does. Yet, the simple comparison remains.

Read Matthew 4:1–11. In what ways is Job’s experience the same as what happens here to Jesus?

In this terrible situation, Jesus’ body is weakened by lack of food. But Jesus in His human form (Romans 8:3) does not do what the devil wants Him to do, the same as Job does not. Satan disappears from the scene after Job stays faithful. Jesus also turns away from Satan’s last effort against Him to cause Him to fall. In the same way, the Bible says that “the devil left Him” (Matthew 4:11, NKJV; read also James 4:7).

But what Jesus faces in the wilderness is only the start. His real test would come at the cross. And though Jesus suffers on the cross, He stays faithful, even unto death.

Read Philippians 2:5–8. What hope does Christ’s “obedience unto death” offer us? And what does it tell us about how we should live in answer to His obedience?

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Students of the book of Job who study the Hebrew come across something very interesting about the word *curse*. Job’s wife’s words to him are translated, “ ‘Curse God and die’ ” (Job 2:9, NKJV). Job 1:5 is translated: “ ‘It may be that my sons have sinned and *cursed* God in their hearts’ ” (NKJV). And Job 1:11 is translated: “ ‘But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely *curse* You to Your face!’ ” (NKJV). In each case the word translated “curse” comes from a word that means “bless.” The word, from the root *brk*, is used all through the Bible for “bless.” It is the same root used in Genesis 1:22, when God “blessed” the creatures (people and living things) He has made. The same root is used in Psalm 66:8: “Oh, bless our God, you peoples!” (NKJV).

So why is the same verb, which means “bless,” translated as “curse” in these few verses? First of all, if the idea of “blessed” were meant in those verses in Job, the verses would make no sense. In Job 1:5, why would Job want to offer sacrifices to God in case his sons had “blessed” God in their hearts? The story requires a different meaning.

So then why does the author not use one of the common words for “curse”? Scholars believe that “bless” is used as a euphemism.⁵ What this word means is that writing down the idea of cursing God is not pleasant or comfortable for the author (Moses). (We find the same thing in 1 Kings 21:10, 13, where the word translated “blaspheme” is from *brk*, “bless”). So Moses uses the word *bless* instead of the real word for “curse,” even though it is clear that the idea of curse is meant.

DEFINITIONS

5. euphemism—a mild or pleasant word that is used instead of one that is unpleasant or offensive.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

① In times of crisis, why is it so natural for people to question whether God is real or to question what God is like? We live in a cold, hard world that is very sinful. In other words, it is a world in which we find out how real the great controversy is. So why must we always remember the Cross before us?

② We know the background to what is going on in the story of Job. But Job does not. All he knows is that bad events are happening to him and his family. He is not aware of the bigger picture behind those terrible events. What should this tell us about how, during times of trouble, we need to remember that there is a bigger picture that we often do not know about or understand? And how can we learn to receive comfort from realizing that there is a “bigger” picture?