

Meet Job — Job 1:1–2:13
James Muldoon — Carey Baptist Church — 27 April 2008

For the next few Sunday mornings, we're going to be looking at a man called Job. We're not going to go through the whole Book of Job chapter-by-chapter. Rather, we're going to look at what Job himself learned about the Lord through the dreadful things which he suffered.

Job 1–2

Some things to notice about Job 1–2:

1:1–5 — Job is introduced to us. He is not an Israelite, but he worships the God of Israel. He's a godly and prosperous man.

1:6–12 — Some of the details here are very obscure. We don't really know what this heavenly meeting is all about with the angels presenting themselves to the Lord. Nor do we know what Satan is doing there. But God and Satan talk together, and God points to righteous Job. Satan knows enough about religious people to know that they're just in it for what they can get out of it, and he says that he will soon curse God if his prosperity is removed. So God lays his integrity on the line, staking his reputation on Job (just as, actually, he stakes his reputation on each and every one of us who is a Christian; people judge him on the basis of what they see in us!). He allows Satan to afflict Job to prove that he is good enough to be loved for his own sake, not for what he gives. But he stays in control, setting limits for Satan.

1:13–22 — In an instant, calamity after calamity is unleashed upon poor Job. You can't imagine the loss of all your wealth and all your children. He mourns. But then he confesses that from the start of his life to the end of his life, he possesses nothing by right; anything he has has simply been lent to him by the Lord. It is right, therefore, for the Lord to give and it is right for the Lord to take away. Either way, his name is to be praised. That is faith.

2:1–6 — Satan isn't finished with Job yet. He asserts that Job has not yet suffered enough; attack his flesh and bones and he'll cave in. So God gives him permission. Again he sets limits for him: he's not allowed to kill him.

2:7–10 — Satan hits Job. If you'd seen him, you probably would have been sick. His body breaks out in sores, erupting with seeping blisters. Mrs Job comes in (and we shouldn't be too hard on her because she's lost everything too), and advocates an indirect method of suicide: she urges Job to curse God (which is exactly what Satan wants – see how subtle he can be, even using our nearest and dearest sometimes) so that God will put him to death. But Job doesn't. He says something like, "Shall we only cooperate with God when he sends good things? Shouldn't we also love and trust and obey him when he sends hard things our way too? Whatever he sends, we should accept from his hand." That is faith.

2:11–13 — Three friends of Job come by to encourage (!) him. When they see him, they're stunned and can't even talk for a week. And then Job speaks... but that's Chapter 3!

i Lessons about mankind

❶ Job illustrates for us that righteous people can suffer, and they can suffer the most unimaginably horrible things. When you suffer you tend to ask, "What have I done to deserve this? Why is God sending this suffering my way? Am I being punished for some sin here?"

Whatever Job's suffering is about, though, it is not because of some sin which he has committed (see **1:1**, **1:8** and **2:3**). So if you are suffering, it does not mean that you've done something to deserve it. It does not mean that you're being punished for something. It might be the result of some sin in your life – see **1 Corinthians 11:29–30**. But it doesn't need to be. Suffering often

comes simply because we live in a fallen world where there will always be suffering. Behind almost every door there is pain, often hidden, frequently drawn out, sometimes very deep.

❷ Faith in the Lord upholds people in their suffering. See Job's example in **1:21** and **2:10**. That does not mean that suffering Christians never have a doubt or a fear: Job is going to have plenty of those. But faith upholds them even in the midst of doubt and fear. Or, more theologically correctly, the Lord in whom we must have faith upholds them.

Are you suffering? Then pray that the Lord will give you faith and pray that he will uphold you. Do you know people who are suffering? Then pray that the Lord will give them faith and pray that he will uphold them. Righteous people suffer, but faith upholds them.

ii Lessons about Satan

❶ Satan exists. Some Christians see him everywhere, even in headaches. Some Christians forget that he exists at all (and in all likelihood, that's where we are). We all know that there is a devil. It's just that we never really think about him. Job 1–2 shows that there are real, influential, unseen, spiritual powers at work and that Satan is one of them. He is the implacable enemy of God (challenging God in both chapters). He is the implacable enemy of God's people (attacking Job in both chapters). He is powerful (using Sabaeans, Chaldeans, firestorms, whirlwinds, and even sickness). He is subtle (seeking to use Mrs Job). He is unseen (not accused by Job of causing all his pain).

Satan is against us. And we must remember that. On your own, you cannot resist him. He is far too subtle and powerful for you to be able to get the better of him. You need help. And thankfully there is help...

iii Lessons about God

❶ God is far mightier than the evil one. That's apparent in **1:6** and **2:1**, and especially in **1:12** and **2:6**. God is in control. And the New Testament shows that even more clearly. **1 John 3:8** says that **"The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work"**. And he did! Our Saviour died on the cross to loosen Satan's grip on mankind. Therefore you must repent of your sin and you must trust in Jesus Christ. Come to him and see Satan's work broken in your life.

❷ God is in control of all that happens in Job 1–2. And that may disturb you. Job says that everything which has happened is down to God in **1:21** and **2:10**. And in an ultimate sense, he's right. Yes, Satan arranges all the calamity which takes place. But he does it with God's permission. God more or less says so in **2:3**.

Bad things happening to good people will not disturb a polytheist, an atheist, a fatalist, or an agnostic. But Christians have to grapple with it. We believe that God is almighty. We believe that God is good. And yet bad things happen to good people. How can we explain that?

That is the springboard which launches the rest of the Book of Job. So far his faith has shone brightly. But as we come to Chapter 3, we're going to see doubts and fears arising in his mind. That happens to people. That happens to the people of God. And that's where we're going to pick it up next time...