

Route 66

Job: Why?! Why?! Why?!

Part 18 – September 13, 2009

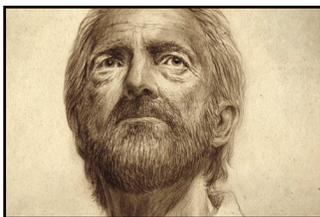
There won't be any archeological or geographical photos to go along with the story of Job. The account is just too ancient. It predates the Kings, the Judges, even the Promised Land. It predates the Exodus, Moses, and the 400 years in Egypt. Job lived after the flood, about the time of Abraham (4000 years ago), in the land of Uz. But, nobody even knows where Uz was!



It's considered the oldest book in the Bible, and it addresses the oldest, most common question to man since Eden: "Why?!" Why must children suffer with cancer? Why are mothers killed in car wrecks? Why does disaster strike good people? Why?! Why?! Why?!

I know ... "free will" *requires* the possibility of moral evil, and the potential to sin and cause harm. But, why doesn't He protect the *innocent* and those who love Him above all else? And what about natural disasters? I know ... we're a fallen people in a broken world influenced by the enemy.

But, God has the power to change it and yet He *allows* it, so isn't He ultimately responsible for all the bad?! And the answer to that is: Yes. He is. So, "Why?! Why?! Why?!" And now I think we're properly prepared.



Drawing by Christopher Koelle

In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil. - *Job 1:1*

It wasn't that he was perfect; it was just that unlike his idol-worshipping neighbors, Job firmly believed and trusted in *one* true God; a sovereign Creator who was good and just.

Job was wealthy and well-known. He had seven sons and three daughters, and he owned over 10,000 animals. There was no temple or tabernacle, so Job was the priest of his family, offering sacrifices for sin.



Drawing by Christopher Koelle

One day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them. - *Job 1:6 NIV*

Which seems weird ... but, Satan will go to any length or location to accuse us, and God will entertain any legitimate challenge. The Hebrew word for "accuser" is "Satan"!

He despises God's plan to turn mud-men into His children and to glorify them above the angels. And so, his all-consuming purpose is to drive an irremovable wedge between the Father and us.

With us it's temptation; with God it's accusation. As "tempter" he seeks to alienate man from God; as "accuser" he seeks to alienate God from man. That's what he does.

Then the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil." - Job 1:8 NIV

God says, "My plan is working; this child trusts and adores me!"

Satan says, "But Job makes my point! You've blessed him in every possible way. *Of course* he 'loves' you! It pays well! But, it's not *real* love ... it's just thinly disguised self interest. By *rewarding* them for their faith, you mistake their selfishness for devotion. Your *entire* plan is a sham and you are deluded! This design has never been shown to work, or proven beyond the shadow of a doubt! You had to wipe 'em all out with a flood - and now you must bribe them with blessings to love you ... you're pathetic! "If Job is your most devoted, I tell you he is the most selfish of them all! If I took away his stuff he'd surely curse you!"

So many read the book of Job and see a *man* being tested by *God*. But it's more than that. In the book of Job it is *God* who is being tested, and the design of *all* creation is on trial! And Job - *faithful* Job - is God's unknowing, highly honored hero! The question is legit: Can man love God if all he has is God?

The Lord said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands ..." - Job 1:12a NIV

This one man will prove or disprove, for time and eternity, to angels and demons alike, whether God's method of producing free-willed beings (who can *chose* to embrace Him) actually works! It's an assignment Job would've *volunteered* for, if he could've known and understood; but that would've defeated the purpose!

In one day, four messengers run to Job with four messages:

1. The first said, "Sabeian [suh-BEE-uhn] raiders have stolen all your oxen and donkeys and have killed your farmhands!"
2. The second said, "Fire has fallen from the sky and burned up all your sheep and all your shepherds!"
3. The third said, "Chaldean [kal-DEE-uhn] invaders have stolen all your camels and have put your herders to the sword!"
4. The fourth said, "A windstorm has blown down the house of your oldest son and has killed all your children!"

Job was devastated. He tore his robe in anguish; he shaved his head in grief; and then he fell to the ground in worship. And never was there a moment when man delighted God more! Remember: The accuser is mighty, but the Lord is almighty!



Drawing by Christopher Koelle

But Satan said, "You cheated! You have protected his body. Let me afflict him with disease he will curse you to your face!"

So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head. - *Job 2:7 NIV*

And his wife told him to curse God and die!

Some days the swelling pinched his eyes
Shut, so he couldn't see the flies
That gorged their black bellies in
The putrid pus that seeped like thin
And yellow sap from crimson bark
Built up with dreadful days of dark
And drying blood. Only his wife
Dared touch his cloak, and with a knife
Relieve at times some throbbing boil,
And with her own bare hands pour oil
On his malignant neck and smooth
It down along his back to soothe
His pain. - *John Piper*

And the enemy stands over him, "C'mon Job, curse God. He's allowed me to take *everything*. Curse Him and die."

He replied, "You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?" In all this, Job did not sin in what he said. - *Job 2:10 NIV*

And I'm sure the angels erupted in shouts of triumph!

But, the enemy had one last trick, worse than the loss of wealth and children, worse than the pain of suffering sores ... the blame that it's all your fault and that God is punishing you. This was the sixth and final affliction.



Drawing by Christopher Koelle

For 35 chapters Job's three friends, Eliphaz [EL-ih-faz], Bildad [BIL-dad], and Zophar [ZOH-fahr] (and later, Elihu [ih-LIGH-hyoo]), come to console him, but end up quarreling and accusing. The only sense they can make of Job's suffering is that it must be well deserved punishment!

Many scholars believe that "Job" was written to refute this warped, health-and-wealth theology. This breaks Job and he loses his temper:

[You] smear me with lies; you are worthless physicians, all of you! If only you would be altogether silent! For you, that would be wisdom. - *Job 13:4-5 NIV*

But they continue to plead with Job to confess his hidden sin. And Job pities himself, and in the process of defending himself, becomes momentarily guilty of self-righteousness. He continues to love God and to put his hope in God, but in his frustration he demands an audience and an explanation from God.



Drawing by Christopher Koelle

And God shows up; in a whirlwind!

The Lord said to Job: "Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him? Let him who accuses God answer him!" Then Job answered the Lord: "I am unworthy — how can I reply to you? I put my hand over my mouth." - *Job 40:1-4 NIV*

It's okay to express our hurt and anger with God and to ask "Why?!" as an honest cry of an overwhelmed heart and an overloaded mind. On the cross, even Jesus cried out:

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? - *Matthew 27:46b NIV*

But Job's question became an accusation against God's character. So, God questions Job about the incalculably complex interplay of human, natural, and supernatural forces, choices, actions, and reactions on multiple levels in multiple dimensions. It was like asking a geoduck clam to explain quantum physics!

Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. - *Job 42:3b NIV*

Then he squirted, dug himself into the sand, and repented!

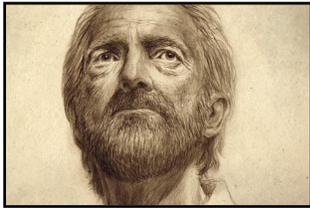
God was saying, "If you can't understand the visible realm (that you can see, hear, and touch), how can you possibly think you're capable of comprehending the invisible realm?" And Job realized he didn't possess the capacity, the creativity, or the foresight to comprehend how a good God can use suffering.

- The answer to "Why?! Why?! Why?!" was "Trust! Trust! Trust!"

And just as Job received this answer face to face with God, so have we. When it comes to cancer and car wrecks and calamities we can trust God's heart for us, because we've seen his mercy, compassion, and love demonstrated in Jesus. The cross is our proof positive that God cares! Listen to Job's prophetic words in the midst of his struggles:

I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God ... - *Job 19:25-26 NIV*

Then God turned to Job's friends and just shook his head. He said, "You were wrong about Job; and you misrepresented me. Go get seven bulls and seven rams to sacrifice. And if *Job* will pray for you, I will accept *his* prayer on your behalf."



Drawing by Christopher Koelle

After Job had prayed for his friends, the Lord made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had before. - *Job 42:10 NIV*

And he lived to see his great-great grandchildren! But, this Job was a very different, softened man.

He never got an explanation or understood (this side of Heaven) the trust that God had placed in *him*, and the incredible part he had played to defend God's plan in the heavenly realm.

Job clung to God's justice even when he himself was the best example in history of God's *alleged* injustice. And God had used the occasion to increase his faith and his character.

There *are* answers for suffering (I offer many in the message: "Suffering Tsunamis" from 1/9/05), but not enough. Suffering forces us to answer the enemy's challenge: Is God worth worshipping if you have nothing but God?

Each of us will have to answer this question at some point in our lives.

Won't it be ironic in Heaven when we see the eternal good our suffering produced within us and without, and what an impediment prosperity really; and we ask God why he didn't grant us more suffering?

Why?! Why?! Why?!