

Job

One of the earliest books in the Bible, written about a period prior to the handing down of God's law (the ten commandments) to Moses. We don't know for sure who the author is, it's thought maybe Moses, maybe Solomon.

Job is described as righteous Job 1:1. Righteous is defined as blameless, upright, fearing God and shunning evil; 3 positives and 1 negative. He loved his 10 kids and worried about their salvation. Ezekiel puts Job in the Bible's top 3 of righteous heroes, he describes the 3, Noah, Job and Daniel as so righteous, they'd be rescued by God were there a catastrophic punishment from Him upon their country. Ezekiel 14:14 & 20.

The book starts with a bet between God and Satan. God taunts Satan and Satan falls into the trap like a mouse with learning difficulties! Does this tell us something about the stupidity of Satan? Would you accept a bet from someone who knew the outcome? Even if the outcome was highly likely and you were offered great odds. So if on 24th Feb 2022, you had no idea of what the result of the previous night's game between Manchester United and Burnley, you were offered huge odds on a United win; would you? Rightly not because Burnley won despite going onto relegation that season. And yet Satan accepted this bet from God who knows the future in exactly the same detail as He knows the past. It tells us something of the calibre of Satan as compared to the power, might and majesty of God.

The wager is agreed and poor Job is all but wiped out. Just as God predicts, he stays faithful and righteous. Job 1:20-22. Later Satan is offered another bet; double or quits. Satan, having failed to learn from his previous experience, agrees to another try. Poor Job is struck down with a worse case of dermatitis and acne than you could even picture.

Job cursed everything about his situation, even the day he was born but he refused to curse God. Satan undeterred, gets Job's wife to help out. Job 2:9. But Job silences her with a huge dose of common sense in verse 10. That verse has been the answer to many a Christian's doubt and God blaming when their life goes pear shaped.

Still undeterred, maybe inspired by Satan, Job's mates decide to pay him a visit. Shocked and at first speechless at what they find, they sit with Job and don't say a word for a week. It's Job that breaks the silence, cursing the day of his birth. Job was human, he wasn't a stoic, stiff upper lipped Brit, he broke down.

Job knew he was being tested by God. Job 7:17-18, 13:9, 23:10. His friends thought Job was being punished for past misdemeanours.

Eliphaz asks to speak. Chapter 4. He starts off nice (verses 3-4) a few words of wisdom (verses 5-6 & 17) garbage (chapter 4:7-chapter 5:16) telling Job his sin has caught him out and he's getting his just desserts, even telling Job to repent!

Job 8. Bildad carries on the same theme, he agrees with Eliphaz but adds that it maybe Job's kids that are the source of the problem. Job 8:3-6. Poor Job was grieving the tragic death of his children.

Job 11. Zophar. He criticises Job's piety. He thinks Job's too good to be true and he's hiding his sins with a veneer of righteousness. Job 11:4-6.

With each of these three critiques, Job responds, protesting his innocence but the friends are not for having it. Thereafter it's like a tennis match, with the ball going in one direction and then the other. The arguments against Job start to deteriorate in Job 22:4-11 with a list of baseless accusations; Job is accused of -

Stripping people, leaving them naked.
Withholding food from the hungry.
Sending widows away empty handed.

Job 38-39 God intervenes in the argument directly. How He's involved second by second in creation and nature. Whenever a lion stalks an antelope, whether it's eaten or escapes is in God's hands. God is all powerful.

Job 42 God remonstrates with Job's mates. He puts their fate in Job's hands and Job prays for them. Job 42:10-17 God blesses Job, restoring his previous fortune, plus some.

Some lessons from the book of Job -

Pray for your kids.
Bad things happen to good people.
It's OK to be not OK.
Avoid judging brothers and sisters - fellow believers.
Look forward to Heaven Job 19:23-27, Revelation 21:4
Look to God in good times and bad.
When suffering, stick with God. He's your only way out.
Friends can be a problem, even believing friends.
When God seems distant, He isn't.

Some relevant verses-

1 Peter 3:14, 1 Peter 4:1, James 1:12, Romans 8:18&35.