

"God on Trial?"

- **After Job, the protagonist in the Book of Job, a man regarded as good and righteous man loses everything in a series of catastrophes outlined in chapters 1 and 2, he is visited by three friends who try to make sense of the tragedy. In chapter 8, Bildad, the second of the three friends reasons that since God is just, Job must have some secret sin of which he should repent, to regain his right standing with God.**

In today's reading, Job wrestles with a problem of universal significance, which has suddenly become intensely personal to him.

How can a just God allow a good man to suffer so greatly?

- Job's dilemma arises from his conviction of the power and sovereignty of God. (vv 1-12)
- Job's despair arises from the apparent injustice of God's rule over creation. (vv 13-24)
- Job's defense is that he has no forum in which to air his case, and clear his good name. (vv 25-35)

Next Week: Acts 17:1-9 "These Men Have Turned the World Upside Down"

1.Context

1. There is nothing in the text to suggest when the events in the book of Job take place, or when it was written (presumably some time afterward).
 - a. It contains no genealogies or identifiable historic events or figures. Might he have been a mythic figure? (See Ezek 14:14, 20, Jas 5:11)
 - b. His wealth is measured in livestock and servants rather than gold (Job 1:3). Does this suggest a time frame? (See Gen 13:2).
 - c. There is no evidence of any formal religious organization (see Gen 14:18 and Gen 41:45), and no mention of any God but one (see Gen 35:2). What, if anything, does this suggest about the timing of the development of monotheism?
 - d. The language in the book is archaic, and the style is quite sophisticated. Do you think this suggests that the book was written early, or late? There is a single use of the name, Yahweh in the book (12:9). Do you think this is anachronistic?

Up to this point in the book, Job has been described as a pious, influential, and prosperous man, who suddenly loses all of his worldly possessions as well as his health. He is visited by three friends who come to comfort him, and then begin to debate with him about the implications of his suffering. His friend, Eliphaz suggests that Job has sinned, and God is chastening him, and his friend Bildad calls upon him to repent. Our text is the first half of Job's response to Bildad.

2.Observation

2. In this passage there seems to be a great deal of emphasis on the power, wisdom, sovereignty and justice of God. Do you see his mercy, love and goodness highlighted? Why do you think that is?
3. Job speaks of contending with God (v 3). What sort of contest is he proposing? (See verses 15-16, 20, 29, 32-33)
4. In verses 25-26, Job mentions swiftness using images of land (runner), sea (skiffs) and air (eagle). What is his point and how does it contribute to his argument?
5. Back in Job 1:9-12 and 2:3-7 we see that Satan had a role in the onset of Job's suffering. Does knowing this provide sufficient answer to the Job's proposed defense?

6. Despite the charges of injustice that Job has leveled against God, something changes in Job's use of pronouns in verses 28-31. What does this imply about Job's orientation, even in the depths of his despair?

3. Meaning

5. Job is particularly eloquent in proclaiming the sovereignty, power, omniscience and transcendence of God (vv 3-12). Is he wrong in concluding that God has control of Job's circumstances, is aware of his suffering, and able to intervene, yet has chosen not to?
6. In verses 13-24, Job complains that there is no appeal of God's judgments. Is he correct in concluding that since life is not fair, God is unjust? Why or why not? Is his claim that God destroys both the wicked and the just (v 22) correct? That God mocks the calamity of the innocent? (See Ps 34:18) Given the revelation that he had received, could Job have known that he was in error? (See Eph 2:12)
7. Job complains that God is not a man, that he might answer Him (v. 32). What is true about God for us that was not true for Job? (See John 1:14)
8. Job complains that he needs an arbiter between him and God (v 33). Is he correct? Does he have one? (See Heb 9:24)

4. Application

11. Do we sometimes accuse God of injustice?
12. When we face trials, do we respond like Job did? Or even worse? Should we be able to do better? (1 Pet 4:12)
13. How can we do better than Job's comforters when we are with others who are suffering?
14. Do we turn to God in prayer, as Job did, even when He seems far away?