



2016 Q4 The Book of Job Lesson 1 (Lori Atkins) The End

We are starting a new quarterly today and will be studying the book of Job over the next 13 weeks. The story of Job is very well-known – even to those not necessarily familiar with the Bible or Christianity. We kind of use Job as a benchmark when evaluating what other folks are going through...if someone experiences 1 hardship or trial after another, we equate them to Job, or if we see someone who is particularly long suffering we say they have the patience of Job.

What comes to mind when you think of Job – the man? His story?

This has always been a very tough Bible book and story for me...am I the only one? Some actually think that the book is fiction or a parable like the Good Samaritan. Even the chronology of when the book was written and took place versus where it is placed sequentially in the Old Testament seems odd – however, there is significant evidence that Job actually lived from 1710-1500, and archaeology has shown that all the geographical and historical details in the Book of Job are accurate and reliable.

The Book of Job is the only one written in Old Hebrew among all the biblical scrolls found at Qumran, beside the books of Moses, and Moses is believed to be the author.

http://www.academia.edu/5613976/The_Book_of_Job_Chronological_Historical_and_Archaeological_Evidence

But without the Great Controversy perspective that I have now, I completely understand how easy it might be to misunderstand or misconstrue some of the concepts portrayed in this book. In fact, I found one very interesting commentary entitled, “Is the Book of Job a Parody?” Well that title intrigued me, so listen to what this author says:

“Sometimes I really do not like certain chapters of the Bible. Two of the worst chapters for me have always been Job 1-2. They tell the story of a good and righteous man who becomes the pawn in a little game of Russian Roulette between God and Satan. Job is the unwitting butt of a cosmic wager. While I do not believe that good and righteous people who love God will always have life turn out peachy keen, I nevertheless have a big problem with a God who uses humans the way that God uses Job in these two chapters. This is divine entrapment! What would you think of a parent who conspired with a drug dealer to sell drugs to the child and threaten them with killing their parents and siblings to see if the child will stay true the parent’s instruction to “Say no to drugs”? What kind of a sick parent would do that? What would you think of a husband who conspired with a friend to try to seduce his wife just to see if she really



loved him? What kind of a husband would do this? Yet this is what God and Satan conspire to do with Job. I'm sorry. I really do not like these chapters of the Bible." He concludes that "If one reads the Prologue of Job without awareness of the author's intent to [argue] against a perennial (recurrent/persistent/lasting) but perverse notion of God, the picture that emerges is precisely the one the author attempted to confute (disprove)!" In other words, Job 1-2 is a parody of the recurrent, persistent *false* view of God. It shows a forgetful God. A power-hungry God. A God who is so desirous of proving Himself right, that He plays around with humans lives, which mean nothing to Him, just to make a point. The author of the Book of Job is making fun of this popular and pervasive (but perverted) view of God in order to show us that our God, the God of the Bible, is not like this at all."

So what insight does our Great Controversy perspective give us when evaluating Job's backstory?

A quote from the book Education gives us this insight:

"Unselfishness, the principle of God's kingdom, is the principle that Satan hates; its very existence he denies. From the beginning of the great controversy he has endeavored to prove God's principles of action to be selfish, and he deals in the same way with all who serve God. To disprove Satan's claim is the work of Christ and of all who bear His name. It was to give in His own life an illustration of unselfishness that Jesus came in the form of humanity. And all who accept this principle are to be workers together with Him in demonstrating it in practical life. To choose the right because it is right; to stand for truth at the cost of suffering and sacrifice—"this is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of Me, saith the Lord." Isaiah 54:17.

Very early in the history of the world is given the life record of one over whom this controversy of Satan's was waged. Of Job, the patriarch of Uz, the testimony of the Searcher of hearts was, "There is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil." Against this man, Satan brought scornful charge: "Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast Thou not made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? ... Put forth Thine hand now, and touch all that he hath;" "touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse Thee to Thy face." The Lord said unto Satan, "All that he hath is in thy power." "Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life."

Thus permitted, Satan swept away all that Job possessed—flocks and herds, menservants and maidens, sons and daughters; and he "smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown." Job 1:8-12; 2:5-7. Still another element of bitterness was added to his cup. His friends, seeing in adversity but the retribution of sin, pressed on his bruised and burdened spirit their accusations of wrongdoing.



Seemingly forsaken of heaven and earth, yet holding fast his faith in God and his consciousness of integrity, in anguish and perplexity he cried: “My soul is weary of my life...” According to his faith, so was it unto Job. “When He hath tried me,” he said, “I shall come forth as gold.” Job 23:10. So it came to pass.

By his patient endurance he vindicated his own character, and thus the character of Him whose representative he was. And “the Lord turned the captivity of Job: ... also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.... So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning.” For those who love God, those who are “the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28), Bible biography has a yet higher lesson of the ministry of sorrow. “Ye are My witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God” (Isaiah 43:12)—witnesses that He is good, and that goodness is supreme. “We are made a theater unto the world, both to angels, and to men.” (1 Cor 4:9)

Who is accused/on trial? Satan’s accusation was against God much more than it was against Job. In Romans 3:4, Paul tells us that God is the One on trial, God is the One accused, and God is the One who will be proved innocent. Paul says:

- “That You may be justified in Your words, And prevail when You are judged.” NASB
- “You must be shown to be right when you speak; you must win your case when you are being tried.” GNT
- God, may you be proved right and true in the hearts and minds of your intelligent creatures when you present yourself openly for their judgment. The Remedy

Why are we here? What is playing at the theater?

By his patient endurance he vindicated his own character, and thus the character of Him whose representative he was.

So this lesson is entitled “The End”, and although it is the first lesson in the quarterly, the focus is on the end of Job’s story...and the importance and even significance of a “happy ending”. We are taught the importance of a good ending in writing classes – whether in fiction or non-fiction, TV shows, movie scripts, the writer needs to have satisfactory closure, tie up any loose ends with characters and story lines. Even in speeches and presentations, a good, clear conclusion is critical.

But what about in real life? What about in our own stories that are hardly ever as neat and tidy?



The quarterly asks, “How could our stories end well, when they always end in death? In that sense, we never really have happy endings, do we, because when is death happy?” Ouch. I found this to be a bit of a recurring dark theme in this week’s lesson, but we are going to try to stay on the bright side since we happen to believe that this 1st death of sleep is not, in fact, the end of our stories.

SUNDAY

Happily Ever After?

What is the standard fairy tale ending? We just talked about the literary importance of happy endings, so most children’s stories and practically every fairy tale ends with, “...and they lived happily ever after”.

The quarterly says, “it’s almost a cliché”...almost??

It’s a full-blown clichéd ending where the handsome prince rescues the damsel in distress, the hero triumphs over the villain, and our lesson suggests that this is how the book of Job ends – at least at first glance – the hero and his (new) wife triumph in the end, or at least end up on a ***relatively*** positive note. But is that only part of the story? Let’s look at the final verses of the book to see how Job’s story ends:

“After Job had interceded for his friends, God restored his fortune – and then doubled it! All his brothers and sisters and friends came to his house and celebrated. They told him how sorry they were, and consoled him for ***all the trouble God had brought him***. Each of them brought generous housewarming gifts. God blessed Job’s later life even more than his earlier life. He ended up with fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand teams of oxen, and one thousand donkeys. He also had seven sons and three daughters...there was not a woman in that country as beautiful as Job’s daughters. Their father treated them as equals with their brothers, providing the same inheritance (which was unheard of). Job lived on another 140 years, living to see his children and grandchildren – four generations of them! Then he died – an old man, a full life.” (Job 42:10-17)

So on paper, the numbers looked really good – twice as much material wealth, 7 new sons and 3 new (apparently super attractive) daughters to replace those he lost. Job’s was apparently healed and restored to health such that he lived another 140 years, so it sounds like he was in a relatively good and happy place by the end of his life. But what about the scars – I’m guessing literal and figurative scars – that lingered on throughout his life? Tuesday’s lesson takes a look into the rest of the story, so let’s skip right over to Tuesday.



TUESDAY

The (Partial) Restoration

So we know that on paper Job ends up better off than before Satan targeted him – God restored “all that the locusts had eaten” (reference to God’s promise made in Joel), but does full healing and restoration mean there is no memory? No pain? No scars?

Have any of you ever had surgery? Even if you are completely healed, maybe you’re even better or healthier than you were before, but won’t you still carry the physical evidence of that procedure for the rest of your life?

Based on the fact that he was near death and covered head to toe with sores and such, it seems reasonable to think that he may have experienced ongoing health issues and carried the physical scars for the rest of those 140 years.

I cannot begin to imagine the pain of losing a child – some of you in this room or some of those listening may have experienced this unfathomable loss...but can you imagine what it is like to lose *10 children*?! At once?! I am sure that while Job was overjoyed to be blessed with 10 new children, but kids are not interchangeable or replaceable! I’m quite sure that he still mourned and missed his lost children throughout the rest of his life.

So even in God’s complete comfort, healing, and restoration there can still be painful memories, mourning of loss, and physical and emotional scars. I also imagine that Job became extremely sensitive and empathetic to others who were suffering pain or loss. I saw a quote this week that said, “God does not comfort us to make us comfortable, God comforts us to make us comfort-able – able to comfort others”! Has anyone found that to be true in their own experience?

The quarterly points out another reason Job’s restoration was partial is because for the most part the reasons beheld all the tragedies that befell him remained a mystery – as it does for pretty much all of us in our own lives!

We live on a planet that is literally groaning under the weight of sin, so we will all likely have a stack of questions that remain unanswered this side of eternity – or sometimes that *IS* the answer. In this world, we are promised to have trouble. To me, this is all related to that deeply ingrained idea – and I mean at the DNA level – that there has to be a reason for the tragedy, for the illness, for the defects we encounter here.



The disciples asked, “Who sinned that this man was born blind?” Job’s friends were absolutely convinced that Job had done something awful or had some hidden, unconfessed sin that caused him to be punished and admonished by God.

I have always been so impressed that Job **NEVER** thought that was the reason...he **KNEW** it wasn’t. He understood God’s character and His methods and the way he governs His universe well enough that he could not be convinced of it by either his friends or his wife.

We really have to be “transformed by the renewing of our minds” in order to drop this notion that God’s goodness or His character of love is defined or described by our earthly circumstances – perceived blessings or lack of blessings. God is love...God is good...period. God is **always** focused on changing us...and **sometimes** He changes our circumstances as well.

Based on how God described Job to Satan, what does this tell us about God’s ability to “judge” or diagnose one’s character?

I want to read you the short story of Job from *The Journal of the Watcher*, Tim’s book that covers the entire Great Controversy from the perspective of the “heavenly watchers”. Spoiler alert: it’s not about us...and it’s not even really about Job.

“Following the flood, while God continued to protect His faithful few and prevent Satan from eradicating them from the earth, Satan saw an opportunity to misrepresent God before the intelligences in heaven and gain access to those still loyal to God. The representative heads of all creation were gathering together in heaven, and Satan thought, If I can twist God’s actions and misrepresent His motives, then maybe I can win more sinless beings over to my cause. Satan reasoned that if he were subtle enough, maybe some of God’s loyal sons would fail to realize that God put many of His earthly children to rest in order to keep an avenue open to heal and redeem. Maybe he could deceive them into believing God was abusive and coercive and could not be trusted. And maybe he could simultaneously corner God into giving him access to destroy those few remaining [humans] loyal to Him on earth.

So Satan went to this meeting in heaven, claiming to be the rightful representative of the earth. But God was not fooled by Satan’s trickery and immediately turned the tables on the Evil One. Even though the devil claimed that the earth was his, God announced to the heavenly gathering that there was a man from Uz who rejected Satan’s methods of selfishness and who was loyal to God, loving others more than self. (remember the quote we read earlier – Unselfishness, the very principle of God’s kingdom, is the principle that Satan hates most, even denies its very existence)



Therefore all the earth was not Satan's, all its inhabitants did not recognize Satan as their leader. But Satan countered God's claim by asserting that God was now lying and that this man only pretended to be loyal because God bribed him with riches and power.

The sons of God were confused; they couldn't read the secret motives of the heart. If they could, none of the angels would have ever been deceived by Satan in the first place. Satan thought, 'If I can get Job to curse God, I can look to all the intelligent beings in the universe and say, 'See, God was wrong about Job. He is wrong about me, too. You can't trust what God Says!'

However, God did know Job, so before this great gathering of heavenly beings He said to Satan, 'Job is in your hands. Do whatever you like, but you must not kill him.' While Satan was free to bless Job with more wealth, he did what he always does – he began destroying and killing, revealing that he, not God, is the true source of disease, pain, suffering, and death. Job, though assaulted by Satan's fiercest attack, revealed the truth about God, demonstrating that God was right and Satan was wrong. God can be trusted. Satan is the destroyer, not God! Satan was bitter that his plot was foiled.”

This Great Controversy, this war going on...it is Not. About. Us!

Obviously, Job started out with a very strong character – God picked him out of everyone alive on the planet. But his character continued to be refined and he continued to grow and mature through his suffering and his questioning of God. He actually *experienced* God and got to know him more intimately during his time of trial and sorrow.

Isn't this so true? In your lives, when were the times that you got to know God most intimately or felt the most dependent on him or felt his presence the closest?

He says in Chapter 42,

“I admit it. I was the one. I babbled on about things far beyond me, made small talk about wonders way over my head... I admit I once lived by rumors of you; now I have it all firsthand—from my own eyes and ears! I'm sorry—forgive me. I'll never do that again, I promise! I'll never again live on crusts of hearsay, crumbs of rumor.”

Oh, don't you want to that kind of growth? To have such a mature character and to be so settled into the truth that God would call you out to be “watched”? That He would enter you into evidence as Exhibit A in His trial.



So, when God says, consider my servant Russell, or Linda, or Wendell, or Theresa – and then regardless of what this world throws at us, we glorify God by revealing His character, His methods, and His principles of unselfish love... *THAT* is how our stories can have the ultimate happy ending.

It is not about the money, or the livestock, or the property, or the children...the only restoration that matters here on this earth is the restoration of our hearts and our characters back to their original design. Job's story has a happy ending because He accurately revealed God's character and His "Law of Love".

Even if *nothing* we have lost in this life gets restored while we're here, can still "live happily ever after."

This quote is from Wednesday's lesson, but it fits better here...from Patriarchs and Prophets,
"The great plan of redemption results in fully bringing back the world into God's favor. *All* that was lost by sin is restored. Not only man but the earth is redeemed, to be the eternal abode of the obedient. For six thousand years Satan has struggled to maintain possession of the earth. Now God's original purpose in its creation is accomplished. 'The saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.'"

That's the real happily ever after.

WEDNESDAY

The Final Kingdom

Wednesday's lesson points out that the Bible is not only a book about history and historical events, it also points us to the future, even to the end of time. It teaches that at the end of time God's eternal kingdom will be established, it will exist forever, and it will be the eternal home of the redeemed. And unlike worldly kingdoms that have come and gone, this one is everlasting.

Is this really what it teaches? Do we have to wait until the end of time for God's eternal kingdom to be established? And is it only eternal going forward...or if the His kingdom is truly "eternal" has it always been?

The Lord's prayer instructs us to pray for His kingdom to come to us here. (Matthew 6:10), Jesus repeatedly preached and taught, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand or has come near." (Matthew 4:17)

He said the kingdom of heaven belongs to those who are like the little children (Matthew 19:14)



According to Mark, he told a crowd

“Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see that the kingdom of God has come with power.” Mark 9:1

Jesus told the Pharisees,

“I drive off demons by the power of God, and this is evidence that god’s kingdom of love has arrived.” (Luke 11:20)

When asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of god would come, Jesus replied,

“The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed. Nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is in your midst or within you.” (Luke 17:20-21).

We may not get the New Jerusalem until the end of time, but I happen to believe that we need not wait until that time to participate in and experience His kingdom of love here and now.

Further Thought - The concluding chapters in the book of Job draw on images of creation and nature. Without answering Job’s question as to the “Why?” of his suffering, God is portrayed as lovingly yet majestically ruling over His creation. Thus, eventually, Job must acknowledge God as His Creator. This recognition catalyzes the big change, or renewal, that takes place in Job’s heart. In the beginning verses of this final chapter (Job 42:2, 3), Job refers to understanding, knowledge, and counsel five times, indicating that he has come to a deeper understanding of who God is and how He relates to His creation.

Could it be that in coming to know God as the creator and designer, Job was able to determine that his design laws work differently than man’s laws and this knowledge led to a deeper understanding of who God is and a big change in his heart and mind?

THURSDAY

The Resurrection and the Life

Job says in Chapter 14,

“If we humans die, will we live again? That’s my question. All through these difficult days I keep hoping, waiting for the final change—for resurrection! Homesick with longing for the creature you made, you’ll call—and I’ll answer!”

Is anyone else here homesick with *longing* for the creature He made, instead of this one here?



Job asks if the dead will live again, and then he says that he waits for his change to come. The Hebrew word for “wait” here also implies the idea of hope. It’s not just waiting for something, it is **hoping** for it. And the Hebrew word here for “change” comes from a term that gives the idea of “renewal” or “replacement” – the change from death to life. I have always waited for this event, but to be honest, I haven’t always **hoped** for it.

When I was younger I was skeptical, I had a lot of plans and things I wanted to accomplish so I kind of hoped the timeframe predictions were off, there were certainly some theologies at play that made me afraid of it...but I can say now that I not only hope for this promised change and renewal, but there is genuine **longing** for it to happen – the sooner the better!

The box at the bottom of Thursday’s lesson asks what Jesus’ question to Martha in John 11:25 tells us about “the end”...this was when Jesus came to the family after Lazarus died and he told Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life.”

But I believe the Message translation really captures that He was NOT just talking about the end, but just like His kingdom being here and now – in us, this statement also references the present.

“You don’t have to wait for the End. I am, right now, Resurrection and Life. The one who believes in me, even though he or she dies, will live. And everyone who lives believing in me does not ultimately die at all.” John 11:25

Similar to when He says in Luke 12:4-5

“Oh my friends, I tell you plainly, don’t let fear of those who can kill the body stop you from sharing the Remedy. That’s all they can do, for they can’t damage your psyche – your soul or your individuality. But I will tell you what you should fear: Fear unremedied sin, which not only damages your body, but sears your conscience, warps your character, and has the power to throw you into a miserable hell. Yes, this you should fear.”

Further Thought - The lesson states,

“The unfolding of truth is progressive, and despite the great light we have been given now, there’s still so much more to learn. In fact, we’ve been told that “the redeemed throng will range from world to world, and much of their time will be employed in searching out the mysteries of redemption. And throughout the whole stretch of eternity, this subject will be continually opening to their minds.” ARH 03/09/1886.

So why does this not seem to be happening in most theological circles?