

## GOD CALLED JOB (1)

A very long time ago, around the time of Abraham, lived a very, very godly man named Job. He had the greatest experience with God and also the most dreadful encounter with the devil. While he was passing through this dreadful experience he wanted to share it with the whole world. But no papyrus roll would last through the ages, so he prayed, "*Oh that my words were now written ... in a book!*" That with an iron pen and with lead they were engraved in rock forever!" (Job 19:23-24). God answered Job's prayer, though it is a mystery how He answered. But now the book of Job is right in the middle of our Bible.

Long before Job's great trial began, God had cast Satan out from his place in the highest heaven. Since then he always kept his eye on the earth, where he always walked up and down looking for ways to cause trouble. He hated this grand man Job, who loved and worshipped God and also cared for the poor people.

One day in heaven when the angels of God came before Him, Satan came also. And as you might expect, he did not come for any good reason. He only came to accuse Job before God, saying that he was not pure in his love for God. He said to God, "*Does Job fear God without a cause?*" What he meant was that Job did not really fear God because he loved Him and honored Him, but because God had blessed him with many riches. Then Satan said something like this, "*Your servant Job will curse you to Your face if you take away that high wall of protection you've put around him and all his riches ... Extend now Your hand and touch all that Job has and You will see that Job will blaspheme You to your face.*" Satan was telling God that Job was only serving God because God blessed him with many good things, but if He took away the good things, Job would not love God. Rather, he would even blaspheme God to His face!" But God knew that Job's heart was sincere toward Him. That is why God had the confidence to tell Satan that he was very wrong. And even to prove it, He allowed Satan to touch whatever Job had, but He put a limit, telling him, "*Only do not stretch forth your hand against him.*" In other words, Satan could touch anything that was Job's, but he could not touch Job himself! So Satan planned all the evil he could do to Job.

It all happened this way: one day while Job was quietly at home, four messengers came one after another to tell him that some thieves, the Sabeans and the Chaldeans, had taken all of his oxen, donkeys, and camels and killed all his servants. Also, there was a great fire that fell from heaven and killed all of his flocks of sheep and even the shepherds. How terrible! But this was not the worst. Finally the last messenger told him the worst news of all, that while his seven sons and daughters were together eating, a big wind blew upon the house they were in and caused it to fall down on them and they were all crushed to death. Surely, this was the worst day in all of Job's life!

After hearing all of this bad news, Job stood up. What a man Job was! Although his loss was so great and the pain in his heart was nearly unbearable, Job did not throw a tantrum nor did he become angry with God. Rather, "Job rose up and tore his clothes and shaved his head, and fell to the earth and worshipped God! Job believed in God and knew that everything that happens in the life of those who love Him come from Him, whether it seems good or bad. This is why in no way did Job blame God. Job's attitude and actions showed how wrong Satan was!

[Scriptural references: the book of Job; James 5:11; Ezek. 14:14, 20]

## GOD CALLED JOB (2)

When Satan saw that Job did not blaspheme God even when he had lost all of his possessions and his children, he was furious and looked for the first opportunity to see God again. When he returned to God, Satan said that Job would curse God to His face if He would touch Job's body and cause him to have pain. God would not do that, but He gave Satan permission to do just that. But just as in the first test, God put a limit as to what he could do to Job. God said to Satan, "*Here he is, in your hand; only spare his life.*" God trusted Job that much! Through this test of Job, God was going to put His enemy, as well as Job's enemy, Satan, to shame.

This time Satan did his worst. Job's whole body was covered with sore boils from the top of his head to the soles of his feet. He could neither stand nor sit nor lie down comfortably.

Three of Job's friends came to comfort him. They had never seen anyone suffer like that and they felt sure that Job must have had some hidden sin; otherwise, they concluded, "*God would surely never let such a terrible thing happen to him.*" Job answered that it was not for any sin in him that he suffered, but that God was testing him for some reason, though he did not understand why. Job's three friends were no help or comfort to him. He was older than they were and he said that since he was in such trouble, they should have pity on him and not blame him for things that were not true.

Job's sores got worse; his skin turned black and split open. In his suffering, one time He prayed and begged God to let him die and go to be with Him, instead of living with such terrible suffering. Job was desperate. On another occasion he told Zophar, one of his comforters, "*He [God] knows the way that I take; should He try me, I would come forth as gold*" (23:10). This meant that Job had the confidence that he was right in God's sight and that if God would test him He would come out as precious as gold. Then Job began to be frightened with nightmares. It was like a big door was put in front of Job, with a huge lock and heavy iron bars. He felt trapped in darkness and in pain. Do you think God could forget His faithful friend Job?

Although Job's pain was so great, he was patiently waiting, knowing that God would one day answer. Job talked a lot with his three friends, trying to give them some reasonable explanation as to why all of this was happening to him, even though he really had none.

Eventually God did speak to Job. He said, "*Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?*" (38:4). Once God began to speak, Job became silent. (Many times when we are so busy talking we cannot hear God!) As he listened to God, Job quickly realized how great God was and how truly small he was. Although Job behaved himself so perfectly well at the beginning of his trial, as time went on he became angry with God and even blamed God for being unfair to him and for causing him to be so miserable. But now that he was listening to God he realized how wrong he was for blaming God for all his troubles. (They actually did not come from God, but from God's enemy and Job's enemy, the devil!). Oh, how foolishly he had spoken! How ashamed he felt! Job regretted and repented. And to show how sorry he really was, he threw dust and ashes on his head. He declared that he only knew God in an outward way before, by what he heard from others, but that now after being so sorely tried and failing the test, he had come to know God in a real way. Now he realized that during all that terrible trial God was carefully watching over him and was secretly preserving his life and wisely allowing the test to work on him for his best good. He now realized that instead of blaming God, he should have simply trusted God and loved Him.

At the very beginning of Job's trial, all of his possessions had been destroyed. But now that Job's severe trial was over, God gave him even greater wealth. The Lord gave him twice as much wealth as he had before, plus seven sons and the three most beautiful daughters in the land. God also gave him back his high position of honor and added to him 140 years of life with his family!

However, we should all realize that all those riches that Job received after he was tested were not the real "gold" that God had for Job. The only true gold in the whole world is God Himself. Job found that to become rich in the knowledge of God is the greatest wealth. He also learned that although other gains will pass away, what we gain of God is forever.

[Scriptural references: the book of Job; James 5:11; Ezek. 14:14, 20]