

2 Summation: In case you didn't know



As a quick reminder, the story of Job begins with the lovely narrative about Job's blessed and influential life in the land of Uz. We really don't know Job's age nor his wife's age, but we do know when the tragedies struck they had seven sons and three daughters.

I personally do not picture Job as most paintings depict him—as some old guy, wearing a long, white beard—as if he was a grandfatherly type. Some scholars assume Job was 70 or older when his trials hit. We have no definitive answers in the biblical text. However, if we look at the last chapter of Job and do the math backwards, it says in Job 42:16 that Job saw his next ten children and their children growing up “to the fourth generation” (a generation was considered 20-35 years) before he died at age 140. It seems that Job would be much younger than assumed by some scholars. I picture him as a man full of vigor and strength like the fathers of young adults today.

Interestingly, in Job 15:10, Eliphaz (one of Job's friends) declares to Job, “Both the gray-haired and the aged are on our side, the ones older than your father.” Eliphaz seems to contrast the old wise men with Job's father and Job is not being placed in that category at all.

One of my friends, Fatima, who grew up in Iraq, shared the sad story of her mother's death. “My mom was only 31 years old when she suddenly died. There were already six of us

children. I was the youngest, age 3. My dad had to be so courageous as he faced a lot of hardships raising us mostly by himself. My dad did a good job.”

Think about it. Fatima’s mom was 31 and had six children. Had her mom lived, she would have been in her forties by the time Fatima was a teenager.

Today, it isn’t unusual for women in many less developed countries to have their first child at age 15-16. When I traveled to Cuba a few years ago, I met a very young mom who was only 18, and she already had three children. So, if she was 15 when she had her first child, she could possibly be a grandmother at age 30, and great-grandmother by age 45.

So, when Job and his wife were hit by the deaths of their ten children who were happily visiting one another at one of their brothers’ homes, it could be possible that Job’s wife might be in her mid to upper 40’s, while Job might be similar in age or some years older than his wife, as was customary in marriage.

Although we don’t know Job’s and his wife’s actual ages when the calamities struck, we do know Job’s ten children were described as young people. His seven sons lived in their own houses and regularly invited their three sisters and friends over to share meals. Job made sacrifices on their behalf due to possible “youthful sins” they might have done during their feasting celebrations. There is no indication that any of Job’s children were married or had children their own. The account of their deaths includes only the ten children and no spouses.

What is clear is that Job’s life, as described in the first chapter, was full of everything a man could ever want. He enjoyed his large family, faced the ongoing challenges of prosperous businesses, and exerted broad influence “as the wealthiest man in the East.”

2 Wagers = 4 Atrocities + 1 Rotten Disease

Quickly in the book of Job we are transported from Job’s earthly bountiful life to the heavenly realm. There we find Satan and God engaged in a conversation about Job’s integrity. God brings up a brand new subject, asking the supreme demonic, fallen angel, Satan, “Have you noticed my servant Job? He’s the most blameless and righteous man on earth, fearing God and turning away from evil.”

Satan, known as the accuser, asserts, “Job would turn his back on you in a heartbeat if his life was not so perfectly protected. After all God, you have given him a charmed life—full of prosperity, prestige, and physical blessings. No wonder he follows you.” So God gave Satan some freedom. “You, Satan, have my permission to test Job, but you may not touch his body.” I call this “The First Big Wager.”

The First Big Wager



Satan, being diabolically cruel, proceeded. He unleashed his evil intents on Job with four devastating attacks. First, he incited the Sabean tribe to strike. The attackers killed Job's servants in the fields with swords and then hauled off all of Job's 500 yoked oxen as they were plowing in the fields, along with Job's 500 grazing donkeys. Only one servant survived their deadly swords, escaping to tell Job. Atrocity 1.

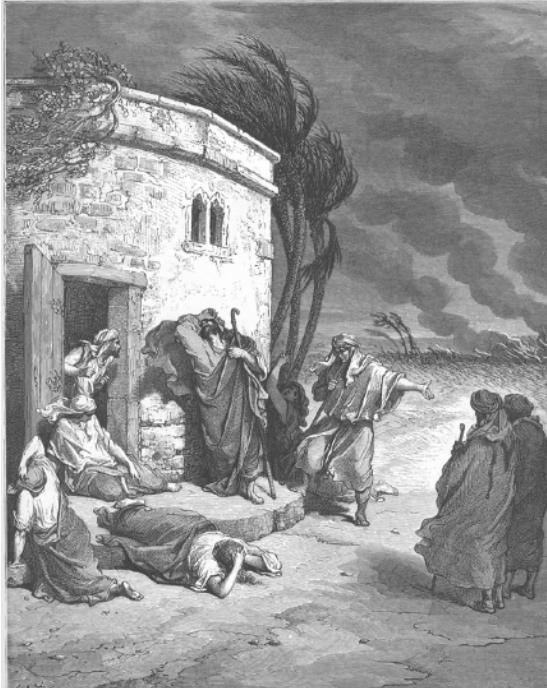
As Job heard the horrific news from the surviving servant, another servant arrived bringing additional bad news. "A fire came down and burned up your 7000 sheep along with all your servants tending them. I alone have escaped." Satan had struck a second time, this time using fire from above. Satan used nature to destroy. Atrocity 2.

Job probably could not take all of this in. But soon another servant rushed in saying, "Job, three bands of Chaldeans carried off your 3000 camels and killed all your servants with their swords! I alone escaped." Such shocking news! Such brutality! How many men were killed on that day? Satan had incited Job's enemies once again to hurt him and his people gravely. Job must have been reeling in the horror of the three unbelievably devastating events.

Atrocity 3 had ended. But the worst was yet to come.

Satan then unleashed his fourth evil upon Job. "I will destroy his beautiful children." This time Satan chose to use a fierce wind. Another servant rushed in to tell Job, "All of your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in your oldest son's home, and behold, a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people and they all have died, and I alone have escaped to tell you." This last and most heart-wrenching loss culminated the worst day of Job's life. Atrocity 4.

Surely Job's head was bursting with anguish, "My servants have been slaughtered, my livelihood is all gone, and all of my dear children are dead. This can't be real. "



We might expect any man, even the most godly of men, to turn his back on God under such horrendous circumstances. Job knew God could have stopped the nightmare.

Yet Job would not turn his back on God. Instead, he expressed acts of grief and then he spoke the unimaginable. He blessed and worshiped God with an amazing response—

“Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised.” *Job 1:21*

The writer of Job adds that “in all this, Job did not sin by charging God with doing something wrong.” *Job 1:22*

So, Job proved to be the amazing man God claimed him to be—as “the most blameless and righteous man on earth, fearing God and turning away from evil.” Despite all of the cruel evils Satan had unleashed on him, Job not only remained faithful to God but immediately worshiped God. Satan decisively lost his first wager.

God was right—Job would refuse to cave in. Job had not lived an exemplary life and followed God because of the delightful blessings he’d been given, but for God alone.

Skin for Skin—The Second Big Wager

Infuriated, Satan would not give up. He returned to God with a new diabolical plan—“I want to harm Job physically. Skin for skin—that should do it.” God gave Satan permission to touch Job’s body, “but you may not take his life.” The second wager was made.

Satan schemed, “How can I hurt Job with the most pain and yet keep him alive?” He decided to afflict Job’s body with boils—from the top of his newly shorn head to the bottoms of his roughly calloused feet—wounding him deeply and everywhere.

Satan literally knocked this man down, struck him, and then walloped him mercilessly with excruciating boils. Satan always acts according to his malevolent and demonic nature.

Yet Job still refused to curse God in spite of his body screaming with relentless pain.

Sadly, Job's great physical sufferings would not stop in a day, a week, or even in a few weeks. His body was terrorized for months (see Job 7:2-4).

Not Just One Man's Suffering. It's Only Just Begun



Job's suffering exploded like a broken dam. A small leak quickly turned into a major catastrophe as it burst into a massive flood, and affected everyone around in its wake. His wife was completely devastated. Job quickly became the mockery of his community. Sadly, just as he needed others to come alongside him, he lost the support of his family and friends. And, Job's three friends, upon hearing of the tragic news, would come to comfort him but they too would soon turn into "miserable comforters."

The longest portion of the book of Job records Job's not-so-nice friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, waxing eloquent with their disheartening and attacking assertions—full of cruel and condemning words. Round after round they would go after Job and he would fight back. As he did so, he told his friends that their assertions about God were flat out wrong. Yet, their harsh words undoubtedly rubbed salt into Job's deeply wounded soul. When they were done, we read of a fourth younger man, Elihu, who would dive in with his perspective, adding to the fray.

Throughout most of the book, this man of God, Job, lamented his miserable life as he desperately tried to defend himself. Job candidly spoke to his friends and to God, fighting to be understood, trying to assert himself. He wanted to go "to court" with God to prove to his not-so-nice friends that he wasn't the uncaring and sinful man they claimed him to be. "If only the Great Judge will hear me and prove them wrong." Job also wanted someone else to stand up for him as an advocate to present his case to God. No one ever did.

Job tried to make a good case. He acknowledged that he had been a sinner, but he also clarified that he had lived a very honorable life with both man and God—just as God had declared. Job cited logical examples to support his view that his extreme suffering seemed severe in light of his honorable life of integrity. And Job's arguments cause us to think, "Haven't we too had times when we questioned God in a similar way?" We might think, "Life is so full of pain, Lord. I know I've not lived a stellar life, but surely all these trials seem too much for me as I try to follow you."

God shows up in the Grand Wrap-up: The Last and Final Movie Scenes

The grand wrap up of Job, like the final scenes of a movie, now comes.

Scene 1: God, in a whirlwind of questions

In chapters 38-41 of the book, God comes in a whirlwind. Kind of scary. Interestingly God's response to Job comes back in the form of a litany of over 70 rhetorical questions. God asked Job questions like— "Where were you when I did such and such?" or "Were you there when I . . .?"

Job could not answer a word.

Scene 2: Job's humility with God

After God finished all of his rhetorical questions, Job responded with deep humility. Realizing he has had such an inadequate view of God, he confesses his ignorance of God and his ways.

Scene 3: God's anger with three haughty men

At last as we come to the tail end of the book, we discover the story line finally brings Job the vindication he had cried out for for so very long.

Job's three proud and presumptive friends—Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar—now become the direct target of God. God speaks strongly. "I'm quite angry with you three men! Your assertions about Job and me and how I work were absolutely wrong!" His wrath pours out. "You need to bring a sacrifice. I have become so angry that if Job doesn't forgive you, then I won't forgive you, either." Job mercifully accepts his friends' large animal sacrifices and forgives them.

Scene 4: Bounty and beauty restored

The final story line of the book of Job wraps up like a well-designed movie plot. At last, Job experiences broad restoration. His boils are gone. His disassociated friends and relatives once again embrace him with compassionate care and with renewed respect, bringing him rings or coins of gold.

God doubles the size of Job's former wealth. And most wonderful of all, Job and his wife are blessed with ten more children—seven sons and three daughters. All would be well with Job's world.



Thought questions:

~Job's early life was full of peace, love, purpose, and prosperity as you read Job 1:1-4 and Job 29. List some of those types of blessings that you currently have in your life and are grateful to God for.

~Job's life was suddenly hit with multiple losses as revealed in Job 1:9-22 and 2:1-10. Describe a time in your life when all seemed to be going so smoothly and then some unexpected losses, trials, betrayals, woundings, or physical problems surprisingly came your way.

~How did Satan play a role in the atrocities that hit Job, his family, and his entire community? See Job 1:6-12 and Job 2:1-7. What different means did Satan use to hurt people associated with Job? How do you think that Satan today uses all kinds of means to hurt people (wars, weather, sickness, persecution by others, etc.)?

~What do you think and how do you feel toward God when you hear of atrocities and tragedies touching the lives of others or experience them yourself?

~What does Job's immediate response mean to you? "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised." *Job 1:21*

Notes:

1. "Today, where contraception is not widely practiced, such as parts of West Africa, it is not unusual to find a woman at age 24 pregnant with her 5th child. In other countries it is similar. "List of Countries by Age at First Marriage." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_age_at_first_marriage, (accessed 5/8/2017).

2. Ancient Nazareth homes were small, simple structures, with rough stone foundations and mud bricks. Drab on the outside but cool, comfortable, pleasant on the inside. http://www.jesus-story.net/nazareth_houses.htm, (accessed 5/8/2017).

3. The Sabean raiders stole Job's oxen and donkeys and struck down his servants with the sword, leaving only one man alive to run back and report the incident to Job (Job 1:13–15). The Sabeans were an ancient people group mentioned in the Bible as coming from a nation far away from Israel (Joel 3:8). They were a people of stature (Isaiah 45:14) and a rival nation to Israel (Job 1:15). The Sabeans lived in the land of Sheba, which archeology suggests was a Semitic trading state that existed for 1,000 years in the area that is now Yemen. The capital of Sheba was called Marib (or Ma'rib), and the kingdom existed from 1200 BC to AD 275, trading primarily in spices. The land of the Sabeans was eventually destroyed as a result of civil war. Isaiah prophesies about Israel's eventual victory over three cultures: the Egyptians, the Cushites, and the Sabeans. The men of Sheba are called "those tall Sabeans" in Isaiah 45:14, meaning they were apparently men of stature and strength. Isaiah prophesies that all three of these groups will eventually be humbled before Israel and admit that Israel's God is the true God: "They will bow down before you / and plead with you, saying, / 'Surely God is with you, and there is no other; / there is no other god'" (Isaiah 45:14). In Joel's prophecy, the Sabeans are mentioned as a distant nation to whom the men of Judah will sell their enemies as slaves, as a sign of God's punishment on Tyre and Sidon. These were nations who dared to come against God's people (Joel 3:4–8).

Interestingly, the Queen of Sheba, or the Queen of the South, who traveled a long way to hear Solomon's wisdom, was likely a Sabean, and the elaborate riches she gave to Solomon show that the Sabeans were a wealthy people. Centuries after her visit to Jerusalem, two warring clans fought for control of Sheba and eventually weakened the empire, and it was overtaken by the Himyarite Kingdom. At that point the mighty Sabeans ceased to exist as a distinct people. <https://www.gotquestions.org/Sabeans.html>, (accessed 3/22/2017).

4. Chaldeans: In, Genesis 11:28 speaks of Abraham's father Terah, who was from "Ur of the Chaldeans" (See also Genesis 11:31; 15:7). The Chaldeans were an intelligent and sometimes aggressive, warlike people. The Chaldeans were people who lived in southern Babylonia which would be the southern part of Iraq today. This Semitic-speaking tribe that lasted for around 230 years, known for their knowledge of astrology, math, and witchcraft, and were latecomers to Mesopotamia. The Chaldeans became known as a fierce and warlike people, and when they were subdued by the Assyrians, a portion of them appear to have been placed in Babylon to ward off the incursions of the neighboring Arabians. Sometimes the term Chaldeans is used to refer to Babylonians in general (Isaiah 13:19; 47:1, 5; 48:14, 20) as they took over Babylon after 620 B.C.E. The Chaldeans had a reputation for cruelty. King

Zedekiah was blinded by the Chaldeans in 2 Kings. 25:7. Habakkuk describes the Chaldeans vividly as their armies with their horses swifter than leopards and keener than wolves. Their horsemen will soon swoop down to devour and bring violence, take captives, as they laugh at kings, rulers, and fortresses which they turn into rubble heaps. These are the people who approach Judah to deport them into Babylon. (Habakkuk 1:6-11). The Chaldeans were conquered by the Persians around 539 B.C.E..

<https://biblehub.com/commentaries/job/1-17.htm>, (accessed 6/20/2020).

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Chaldeans.html>, (accessed 3/22/2017).

<https://www.google.com/search?q=chaldeans+in+bible&oq=Chaldeans+in+bible&aqs=chrome.0.0l8.7609j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8> accessed 6/20/20.

<https://study.com/academy/lesson/the-chaldeans-definition-history-culture.html#:~:text=Considered%20the%20little%20sister%20to,or%20Assyria%20at%20full%20strength>, accessed 6/20/20. Omar C. Garcia <http://www.bibleteachingnotes.com/templates/System/details.asp?id=29183&fetch=8072>, (accessed 2/27/2017).

Images:

1. Image of: "Abraham Journeying into the Land of Canaan" Engraving by H. Pisan after illustration by Gustave Doré, - Héliodore-Joseph Pisan https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Gustave_Dor%C3%A9#/media/File:Abraham_Journeying_into_the_Land_of_Canaan.png, (accessed 3/21/2018).

2. Statue of man killing another man, depicting Cain and Abel https://www.google.com/search?q=cain+and+abel+art&tbs=isch&tbs=simg:CAQSlwEJqM7y_1MJFbuwaiwELEKjU2AQaBAgACAMMCxCwjKcIGmIKYAgDEijZDrAZ2g7aAfcBxw6vGewKtxnVDvks8izsKPos7yzsLPgs8CztLPssGjBdNbYL9_1fwblrMYDWsQOHDbbA9MI8VOYy9Y6uc4g13K8JkZaje5DVACU9ABWi9dq8gBAwLEI6u_1ggaCgoICAESBI_1TJOIM&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwimxpn5r-nVAhVINiYKHQ5MDrAQwg4IJSgA&biw=1243&bih=694, (accessed 3/22/2018).

3. Etching of Job laying on ground upon hearing the terrible accounts of loss. <http://www.ancientbibletruths.com/Resource-980/OT-136.jpg>, (accessed 3/22/2018).

4. A close up of etching (see above).

5. Image goat herders in middle east landscape (This image will be used for all of the thought question sections). https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Goat_Herders_in_a_Middle_Eastern_Landscape_Frank_Dean.jpg, (accessed 6/10/2020).