

6 Job—A good guy in a bad world

Garden to Wasteland

When evil comes

Job challenges all men to contradict what he affirms
that the righteous may be greater sufferers,
and the wicked may for awhile prosper,
but that God will in the end
overthrow the ungodly and establish the righteous.

~Charles Spurgeon



As I studied the life of Job, I fell in love with the amazing man who was described by God in a wonderful way—“blameless, upright, fearing God, and turning away from evil.” God declared Job to be the godliest man on earth during his day. Quite remarkable.

After Job had been hit by four devastating losses, God told Satan that his servant Job “holds to his integrity although you incited Me against him *without cause.*” *Job 2:3b*, (italics mine).

It is important to remember that Job suffered the loss of all of his children, most of his servants, the main sources of his income, and then his health—all “without cause.” We don’t have time to discuss God and the presentation of evil in Job’s life except to say that Satan did the evil deeds and God gave him permission to do so. There is a bigger picture, even yet.

Garden to Wasteland

Why do we have so much pain and suffering in our world? It all goes back to the first man and woman. This is crucial to understand.

Just think, in the beginning God created Adam and Eve. He provided them with everything they could ever want—a lush tree-filled garden to be tended with joy, filled with exotic creatures maneuvering on land, moving in the waters, and flying in the skies above.

There was something new and delightful to discover and experience every day. Together Adam and Eve shared their dominion over all. And each delightful day ended with talking to God in the cool of the day, to the Holy God who is full of compassion and wisdom. The most refreshing vacation and work site one could possibly imagine. What could be better?

Yet for Adam and Eve it wasn't enough.

Instead of fully enjoying their marvelous world and God as their sole source of satisfaction, they demanded something more. Satan came directly to Eve enticing her to question God. He asked, "Has God indeed said . . .?"—just as people in every generation since have been tempted to wonder, "Has God really said?" Eve and Adam also wondered, "Is there more?" She and Adam evidently decided that Satan was right. "God must be holding out on us. We do want more. Let's eat the fruit. Let's become like God, and know both good and evil. We won't surely die."



Are we not like Eve and Adam at times? Do we feel dissatisfied with God and think, “God, you are holding out on me. You don’t know what’s best. What could be wrong with wanting the very thing that you forbid? Surely, disobeying you won’t be a problem. I’ve decided that you alone are not enough. I want something more, and so I am taking it.”

When Adam and Eve ate from the forbidden tree it was an act of defiance and anti-worship of God. God alone wasn’t enough. What God had warned against, they would violate. After all, God had provided and had personally communicated. Adam and Eve refused to worship God by obeying him alone, but instead listened to the deceptive lying creature. There was something else they coveted more than all they enjoyed. They wanted to become like God in knowing what he knew.

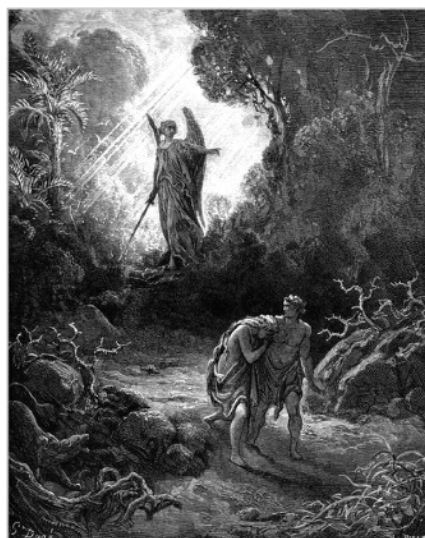
They took Satan’s bait. They looked at the gleaming fruit that was forbidden. Their hearts followed their eyes. They enjoyed its beauty and delicious flavors.



As they ate the delightful fruit, through their self-seeking disobedience, Adam and Eve set into motion destructive evils on every level. First, their all-consuming appetite to be like God utterly and diabolically broke apart their pure and close relationship with him. They did not die physically that day, but they died spiritually for the rest of their lives on earth.

Sadly, by taking what was never meant for them to experience, Adam and Eve now knew both good and evil. A frightening horror. Their sin also initiated all the evils to come from then on—for all humans and creatures to know and encounter on earth.

Then they hid. They hid from God. They hid from one another. Their pure and holy relationships were no longer free of sin and its effects.



The idyllic world God magnificently designed as a garden would no longer be their wondrous home. Within the garden was a tree of eternal life and God didn't want Adam and Eve to spend eternity in spiritual death. Mercifully, yet tragically, Adam and Eve were sent outside of the garden into the non-garden world, a "wasteland" by comparison.

At the moment of enticed disobedience-to-God consumption, all humans, creatures, and the entire natural system became marred by sin, seemingly beyond all repair. So now every human being lives in the wounded world, and now every person experiences both good and evil, life and death, joy and sadness, fulfillment and disillusionment. Evil and good have become a part of every person's life story ever since. And creatures now also no longer lived in peaceful harmony with one another.

The Apostle Paul describes our world as groaning, longing to be healed.

"For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now." *Romans 8:22*.

We groan. Life is painful, wrenching in pain at times. Death, sickness, hardship, cruelty and evil now press in, alongside the wonder of life, love, good, healing, beauty, and purity.



When people ask, and when you and I ask, "Why does God allow pain and suffering?" or when we ask, "Why is there so much evil running rampant in the world?" God might respond, "I never intended for any human to know pain and suffering at all, nor to ever encounter evil's hardships. I wanted all people to experience only the delights of my garden in a perfect world, full of wonder and closeness with me, and also close intimacy with one another. Adam and Eve were meant to live and work together with joy and were meant to bountifully produce children in my garden, in the wonderful world I provided."

God might then add, "But instead Adam and Eve chose 'to know good and evil' when they willfully took what they thought I had held back from them. Do you not see how evil flooded into the world, washing over every aspect of it? Sadly now, every person from birth till death experiences good and evil. The natural world also was violated and now carries the pain of hard toil to tame it. Human relationships also are deeply marred. Every person experiences what I never intended—blaming, anger, avoidance, conflict, bitterness, deception, manipulation, selfishness, violation, abuse, and cruelty."

But God also provided a way of hope.

Hope in the Future of restoring the garden

In Genesis 3:16, God spoke in the garden of the seed of the woman who would someday crush the head of the snake, Satan, who had just “bitten her heel” so to speak. On that monumental day Eve’s future descendant would crush Satan with a mortal blow.

Because God so loved the world, he would sacrifice his Son to crush the power of death. And so thousands of years later, Jesus would be born as the God-man, and his bloody death on the cross would pay the full penalty for sin—once and for all, beginning with Adam and Eve’s very first sin. When Jesus rose from the dead, he also destroyed once and for all people being forever spiritually dead where they were separated from God’s presence.

Jesus crushed Satan’s head on the day of his crucifixion for man’s sins. So, Satan lost when God won as Christ died for sin and paid it all. Jesus rose to victory over the darkness and bondage that sin held over all of mankind. From then, each of us who receives Christ as our Savior will inherit eternal life. We will live spiritually forever with God, as Christ’s righteousness will become our payment.

Finally, in the end Satan and his demon followers will be thrown into the lake of fire. There will no longer be the destructive worship of false gods and false beliefs, but a return to worship of the one true God. The presence of sin will at last end. And the brokenness brought into this world and all creation through sin will be no more. In the future God also promises to bring about a re-created heaven and earth.

The wasteland will once again become a garden.

Someday. Someday the lion will lie down with the lamb. That is not this day. Someday the child shall play in the cobra’s den. That is not this day. Someday all people will get along beautifully well—full of only love, care, joy, and unity. Not now. Someday there will be a glorious new day of no more sorrow, suffering, pain, or death. The marred earth and all marred people will be restored! That is going to happen.

We all long for that day!

Earthly Wasteland, Ruthless Ruler



What do we do now as we live in the “wasteland?”

Importantly, Jesus describes Satan as “the ruler of this world” (*see John 14:30; 16:11*). And Paul calls Satan, “the god of this world” in *2 Corinthians 4:4*. Not good!

“This world” refers to the present evil system working throughout our earth. Importantly, the Bible never teaches that Satan actually rules over the entire world (although at times it may feel like it), but that he is ruler over the current world system which is in sinful opposition to God. In other words, Satan loves leading all rebellion against God as he incites, deceives, and guides destruction on earth (*see 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4*).

A rogue kingdom versus God’s designed kingdom.

Apostle John speaks of Satan as being the “deceiver” of entire nations in Revelation 20:3. Can we not see the deception of masses of people evident today?

Our present reality is that we live in a very broken world. We experience the effects of the evil ruler Satan throughout the earth. We see and feel his vile rulership ramifications as we watch TV or check our news feeds. When John speaks of Satan being the deceiver of entire nations, he knows that Satan works to manipulate the sons of disobedience whenever and wherever he can. He and his minions work 24/7 to deceive, kill, and destroy all that is good, pure, and lovely—all that is the opposite of our Holy and loving God. We see it in our world every single day. My husband describes the evening news as the “the nightly sin and disaster report.”



Job’s world was little different from ours. He lived in a wasteland world that he tried to make more like a garden. He cultivated aspects of his world, knowing that God was always

watching. Yes, Job was given wealth, health, bounty, and great influence. Yet, Job also saw and knew that his world was also full of broken people who experienced, like he did, all of life's fullness mixed in with grave depravity. So with great integrity, compassion, and skill, Job used his life for the welfare of others. We will later look more closely at what Job did to make a difference in his broken world.

When Job was hit with the shredding barbs of life, he demonstrated that even a man who reflects the protective and providing heart of God is not immune from pain and evil. In fact, it was because he lived his life so honorably that he was hit by the fury of the Enemy.

Satan is quite creative. He didn't use just one way to destroy this man's life. First he incited the greedy Sabeans, known for their uncommonly large body size, to haul off Job's oxen. Satan then incited the evil Chaldeans to send three raiding parties to take away all of Job's camels and donkeys. And then Satan used a fire from heaven and a whirlwind from the air to destroy Job's sheep and all of his ten children. We can see that Satan is quite powerful and loves to bring his evil destruction through many devious means.



Should we be surprised when people and entire nations reject God and follow Satan's lead? He offers the world and its people what they long for, what naturally is enticing to them. Should we be surprised by the vileness of evil done by nation against nation when power hungry leaders give allegiance to deceptions and lies of Satan—dehumanizing man with their lust for more power, control, and greed. Should we be surprised by those who willfully destroy parts of God's creation? Satan offers what is gratifying in the moment. And doing evil can make people feel they are getting what they want.

And to put it more personally, should we be surprised by the ways we see our own part in turning our gardens into wildernesses when we listen to Satan's tempting words?

Job under the magnifying glass

That's why the lengthy book of Job is so valuable to you and me. How would a man of God, a blameless and upright man, handle atrocities that came his way, especially when they came to him "without cause?" How does one keep on keeping on when all is against him?

We will discover that Job would continue to follow hard after God under debilitating circumstances. That's what made him so different—a hero, a model, a marvel. He reached out to God when diabolical evils affected not only himself, but his family and his community. He had done well in bringing justice, protection, and provision to the people. Now when the many evils from Satan were hurled to decimate him and his community, he would moan in misery unable to

help alleviate the destruction. But Job would talk to God sharing his deepest thoughts and feelings.

In my study I decided to primarily focus on the words spoken by Job and God's responses to this enduring man. Why?

Twice in the final chapter of the story, God noted that he had become deeply angered with Job's friends for what they had claimed and assumed about him (God) that was false. They kept accusing Job of being a bad man, an evil man and claimed that's why God had brought suffering to him. The men didn't understand the nature of evil, the nature of God, and that people don't only suffer due to sins they've committed. God knew there was a bigger, far more complicated and intricate picture. Job's friends were utterly oblivious to anything beyond their small perspective.

“My wrath is kindled against you [Eliphaz] and against your two friends [Bildad and Zophar], because *you have not spoken of Me what is right as my servant Job has.*”
Job 42:7, italics mine

And twice in this last chapter God gives Job a backhanded compliment in the process of reprimanding the three men who declared to Job they knew why he was suffering and that they had the solution. Yet, twice God declares that Job had “spoken something right” about him and how he works. So, Job is commended by God in the end.



Thought questions—

~In Job 2:3 God notes that Job has been attacked with suffering and trials “without cause.” Describe a time where you felt upset with suffering coming to yourself or another because it didn't seem right.

~As we talk about the choices Adam and Eve decided to take as they lived in the gorgeous garden in Genesis 1-3, what were the circumstances that led them to no longer worship God

alone but instead choose to disobey? Describe a time when you may have felt you did something similar, choosing your own way over being satisfied with God alone? What were your circumstances? How were you thinking?

~As you read John 14:30; 16:11, 2 Corinthians 4:4, 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, and Revelation 20:3, jot down the description of Satan and the ways he works. How does it make you feel that Jesus, Paul, and John all saw Satan being so powerful in our world?

~ We all long for a day when evil is no longer part of our lives, but we are not there yet. What different means did Satan use to attack Job as you look at Job 1-3? What different means has he used in the lives of those you know to bring his attacks to you and others?

~Where has the Enemy attacked you as you try to live for God? What have been some of the best solutions to counter Satan's lies and deceptions? Adam and Eve believed Satan. What has helped you to discount Satan and see through his trickery?

~ How do Spurgeon's words of truth encourage you to respond to your suffering or others who suffer?

Job challenges all men to contradict what he affirms
that the righteous may be greater sufferers,
and the wicked may for awhile prosper,
but that God will in the end
overthrow the ungodly and establish the righteous.

~Charles Spurgeon

Notes:

1. Charles Spurgeon: <http://www.enduringword.com/commentaries/1824.htm>, (accessed 2/4/2017).
2. Job 2:3b, see website for more information: <http://unlockingthebible.org/god-vs-satan-authority/>, (accessed 2/14/17).
3. "Sabeans," <http://biblehub.com/topical/s/sabeans.htm>, (accessed 2/2/2017).
4. "Chaldeans," <http://biblehub.com/topical/c/chaldeans.htm>, (accessed 2/2/2017).

Images:

1. Image of fruit https://www.google.com/search?biw=1243&bih=694&tbm=isch&sa=1&q=fruit+tree+domain+free+vintage+painting&oq=fruit+tree+domain+free+vintage+painting&gs_l=psy-ab.12...1674310.1679949.0.1681578.21.19.2.0.0.522.2481.6j3j1j0j2j1.13.0...0...1.1.64.psy-ab..6.0.0.uCd88CAh3hA#imgre=LV1sRtkQGRaAHM:, (accessed 2/2/2017).
currently in the public domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Breadfruit_by_Marguerite_Girvin_Gillin_c._1884,_Bishop_Museum.jpg, (accessed 2/4/2017).
2. Etching of Satan makes his way through Eden, illustration for *Milton's Paradise Lost* https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Gustave_Dor%C3%A9#/media/File:Paradise_Lost_14.jpg, (accessed 2/7/2017).
3. Etching of Satan Hides in Paradise, illustration for *Milton's Paradise Lost* https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Gustave_Dor%C3%A9#/media/File:Paradise_Lost_15.jpg, (accessed 2/4/2017).
4. Etching of Adam and Eve driven out of the garden of Eden, illustration for *Milton's Paradise Lost* https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Gustave_Dor%C3%A9#/media/File:Adam_and_Eve_Driven_out_of_Eden.png, (accessed 2/4/2017).
5. Etching of Satan illustration for *Milton's Paradise Lost* https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Gustave_Dor%C3%A9#/media/File:Paradise_Lost_3.jpg "Satan talks to the council of Hell" - Gustave Doré – Wikimedia Commons, (accessed 2/4/2017).