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By

PAUL E. KRETZMANN, Ph. D., D. D.



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TABLE OF CONTENTS.

| | PAGE | | PAGE |
|------------------------------------|------|-----------------------------|------|
| THE BOOK OF JOB | 1 | THE BOOK OF JOEL | 651 |
| THE BOOK OF PSALMS | 59 | THE BOOK OF AMOS | 657 |
| THE BOOK OF PROVERBS | 214 | THE BOOK OF OBADIAH | 668 |
| THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES | 260 | THE BOOK OF JONAH | 670 |
| THE SONG OF SOLOMON | 277 | THE BOOK OF MICAH | 675 |
| THE BOOK OF ISAIAH | 287 | THE BOOK OF NAHUM | 685 |
| THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH | 398 | THE BOOK OF HABAKKUK | 689 |
| THE LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH | 500 | THE BOOK OF ZEPHANIAH | 694 |
| THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL | 510 | THE BOOK OF HAGGAI | 698 |
| THE BOOK OF DANIEL | 603 | THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH | 702 |
| THE BOOK OF HOSEA | 643 | THE BOOK OF MALACHI | 719 |

THE BOOK OF JOB.

INTRODUCTION.

The Book of Job bears the name of the patient sufferer whose history is rightly regarded as the great example of ready submission to the will of God. The purpose of the book is to discuss the question, the great and perplexing problem, why the righteous God inflicts suffering on a good man while many a godless person seems to be enjoying nothing but the greatest good fortune. The question is answered in such a manner as to show that Job is a righteous man, that his faith and patience are exemplary, that his sufferings were sent upon him not as a punishment, but as a wholesome chastisement, to prove, test, and purify his faith, and that they, in the last analysis, served for the glorification of God. It was not because Job had committed some extraordinary sin that he was afflicted with such extraordinary suffering, but because the Lord, in His sovereign majesty, chose to apply such measures for the highest spiritual welfare of His servant.

Although the Book of Job, with the exception of the introduction, is a poem, one of the grandest productions, not only of Hebrew poetry, but of the literature of all ages and all nations, it is nevertheless founded on historical fact and contains actual historical material. The prophet Ezekiel, chap. 4, 14, 20, as well as James, the brother of the Lord, chap. 5, 11, refer to Job as a historical person. The land of Uz, in which Job lived, was probably a district of Northern Arabia. He himself seems

to have lived in the age of the patriarchs, to whom he may have been remotely related. His story, however, occurred just before the children of Israel were delivered from the bondage of Egypt.

The Book of Job is obviously divided into three parts. After the prolog, which tells of Job's piety and good fortune, of his subsequent misfortune, and how he bore up under it, there follows the main part of the narrative, altogether in poetical form. We have here the dispute between Job and his friends concerning the cause of his calamities, followed by the vindication of God's righteousness in His government of the world, and finally by the intervention of God Himself, who reproves Job and gives the solution of the problem which was challenging the faith of Job.

The author and the date of the book cannot be fixed with certainty. It has been ascribed to Moses, to Job himself, to Solomon, and to some prophet at the time of Israel's greatest glory. It cannot be dated before Moses nor later than about the eighth century before Christ. The Book of Job is so obviously a unit, as the entire outline and form indicate, that its integrity cannot be questioned with any degree of plausibility.¹⁾

1) Cp. Fuerbringer, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, 45—49; *Concordia Bible Class*, April, 1919, 54—57; *Theol. Monthly*, 1921, 161 ff.

CHAPTER 1.

Job Loses His Great Good Fortune.

JOB'S WEALTH AND PIETY. — V. 1. There was a man in the land of Uz, in Northern Arabia, toward the Euphrates, whose name was Job, generally considered a descendant of Aram, Gen. 22, 21, and therefore related to the patriarchs, although very distantly; and that man was perfect and upright, his moral integrity and blamelessness resulting in the true righteousness of life, and one that feared God and eschewed evil, his heart being disposed in the right manner toward God and everything good, and therefore also filled with loving regard for all men. Job seems to have been an emir, or chief, of the country, both on account of his wealth and on account of his Popular Commentary, Old Test., II.

ability as leader. V. 2. And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters, a great blessing of God; for children, according to Scriptures, are special gifts of His kindness, Ps. 127 and 128. V. 3. His substance also, that is, his possessions, his wealth, was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she-asses, and a very great household, very many servants, these being needed to maintain an establishment of such princely magnitude, so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the East, he outranked in wealth and power all the inhabitants of this section of Arabia. V. 4. And his sons went and feasted in their

houses, every one his day, they observed the custom of celebrating the several birth-days in the family, or some other special holidays, with banquets connected with wine-drinking; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them, for the sons had establishments of their own, while the unmarried sisters lived at home with their mother. These invitations were regularly issued and as regularly accepted. V. 5. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, when the annual period of these festivals had come to a close, when every one of the brothers had arranged and celebrated his feast, that Job sent and sanctified them, to atone for probable transgressions by sacrifices of purification, and rose up early in the morning and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all, Job himself officiating as priest of the congregation of his family and making his offering at a time when the hearts would be most inclined to quiet contemplation; for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, forgetting the careful watch over every single word and act which quiet sobriety demands, and cursed God in their hearts, renouncing or forgetting Him and His fear, as they abandoned themselves to their pleasure. Thus did Job continually, he was wont to do that as often as occasion demanded, every year. Job is an example of a pious father, who fears God and brings up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, who also patiently corrects their faults and guides them in the paths of righteousness.

SATAN GIVEN PERMISSION TO AFFLICT JOB. — V. 6. Now, there was a day when the sons of God, God's own holy spirits, the angels ministering unto Him, came to present themselves before the Lord, the picture being that of a great monarch who daily assembles his ministers and servants about him, and Satan, the great adversary of God and men, came also among them. Although condemned to the chains of hell, the devil, as the prince of this world, has as much freedom as the Lord permits him to have, not only in governing his own subjects, but also in afflicting the children of God and in leading them into temptation, 1 Cor. 10, 13. V. 7. And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? The object of the question was to find out whence the devil was just then coming, what he had most recently been trying to accomplish. Then Satan, who is bound in obedience to the almighty Ruler of the universe, although most unwillingly, answered the Lord and said, From going to and fro in the earth and from walking up and down in it. The words refer to the peculiar characteristic of Satan, for it is his custom to roam about, seeking whom he might devour, 1 Pet. 5, 8; he is a being without stability, malicious, intent upon evil. V. 8. And the

Lord said unto Satan, in His omniscience familiar with the evil intent of Satan, Hast thou considered My servant Job, literally, "set thy heart upon him," that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, standing out among men both for the piety of his heart and for the righteousness of his life, one that feareth God and escheweth evil? V. 9. Then Satan answered the Lord and said, Doth Job fear God for naught? That is, Dost Thou suppose he is pious and God-fearing without good reason, without reward or profit? Satan's sneering implication was, of course, that Job feared God only because he had been so abundantly blessed with wealth and honor, that it was only this fact which caused him to feign a piety which he did not really feel. V. 10. Hast not Thou made an hedge about him and about his house and about all that he hath on every side? Under such conditions, Satan implies, it would be an easy matter for any person to make a show of piety. Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance, his wealth, especially that in cattle, is increased in the land; it has become so numerous that it can no longer be confined to a small area. Genuine piety loves God for His own sake, regardless of special earthly blessings, without specific stipulation and claim. Satan denied that Job's piety was of this kind. V. 11. But put forth Thine hand now and touch all that he hath, namely, to smite, to injure, and destroy it, and he will curse Thee to Thy face, the form of the Hebrew sentence showing that Satan affirmed his statement as in the case of an oath: Verily, most surely. V. 12. And the Lord said unto Satan, accepting the challenge contained in his words, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. Satan thereby received permission to deprive Job of all his property, of all his immense wealth; but he was not allowed to touch the person of Job. The obvious intention of the Lord, in granting this permission to Satan, was to test the integrity and the piety of Job, to prove his sincerity over against the devil's sneering insinuations. It was a phase of the battle of light with darkness. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord, ready to begin his work of destruction, for he is a murderer from the beginning; plunder and destruction are his delight. The thought that the Lord, in permitting misfortune to come upon His children in this world through the hatred of Satan, has the purpose of proving the sincerity of the believers should stimulate the latter to meet the attacks of the devil with the spirit of true loyalty to their Father in heaven.

JOB'S GREAT AFFLICTION. — V. 13. And there was a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in

their eldest brother's house, at one of their customary banquets; v. 14. and there came a messenger unto Job and said, **The oxen were plowing and the asses feeding beside them, grazing in the meadows near by, v. 15. and the Sabeans, a nomadic tribe of Northeastern Arabia, fell upon them, and took them away, took everything along as welcome plunder; yea, they have slain the servants, those in charge of the work, with the edge of the sword, sparing none whom they could find; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee, the only survivor of the massacre. V. 16. While he was yet speaking, before he had even finished his message of misfortune, there came also another and said, The fire of God, evidently a shower of fire and brimstone, is fallen from heaven and hath burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, completely destroying also this part of Job's possessions; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. V. 17. While he was yet speaking, there came also another and said, The Chaldeans, at that time a nomadic tribe living near the Euphrates, made out three bands, attacking in three divisions, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword, sparing none; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. V. 18. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, a fourth messenger of evil, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house; v. 19. and, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, a violent tornado from the east or northeast, and smote the four corners of the house, taking**

hold upon the whole house or tent at one time, and it fell upon the young men, upon all the young people there assembled, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. In each case the messenger implies that his escape was effected only with the greatest difficulty, and each message increases the sense of the greatness of the calamity. V. 20. Then Job, who was more deeply affected by the information of the death of his children than by the loss of his entire property, arose and rent his mantle, showing the violence of his grief, and shaved his head, another sign of deep mourning among certain ancient nations, and fell down upon the ground, and worshiped, in the attitude of the most humble and submissive adoration, v. 21. and said, **Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither, that is, into the bosom of the earth, from which man was originally made, departing as poor and as helpless as when he came. The Lord, the great Jehovah, gave, from Him had all the blessings come which Job had enjoyed, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord! This is an example of most patient submission, of bowing to the will of the Lord in childlike trust and in firm confidence. It is in this sense that all believers must learn to think of God as praiseworthy at all times, whether His wisdom sees fit to give or to take away. V. 22. In all this Job sinned not, not even in questioning God's decrees, nor charged God foolishly, attributing senseless or foolish acting to God. It is this phase of Job's character, a patient submission to the will of God at all times, which believers should be zealous to copy.**

CHAPTER 2.

The Severer Trial and the Visit of Job's Friends.

JOB STRICKEN WITH A SEVERE DISEASE. — V. 1. Again there was a day, some time after Satan had exhausted his efforts to shake the piety of Job by the destruction of his property and the slaughter of his children, when the sons of God, the angels, as ministers of Jehovah, came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord, as on the previous occasion, chap. 1, 13. V. 2. And the Lord said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the Lord and said, just as he had done before, From going to and fro in the earth and from walking up and down in it, in his restless, ceaseless endeavor to harm the works of the Lord and to lead men into sin. V. 3. And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered My servant Job, namely, by con-

centrating his attention upon him, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil? Cp. chap. 1, 1. And still, in spite of the severe affliction which had come upon him, he holdeth fast his integrity, to his piety and to the perfection of his righteousness before men, although thou movedst Me against him to destroy him without cause, namely, by giving Satan permission to send such great misfortunes upon him, part of which included the use of the forces of nature, which God, in a manner of speaking, placed at his disposal. Note the divine irony in the language of Jehovah, especially as contrasted with the baffled sneering of Satan. V. 4. And Satan answered the Lord and said, in the rage due to his failure, **Skin for skin; yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. The meaning of this proverbial saying is that nothing outward**