

# Job 1:13-22

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## *Tragedies Sent by Satan*

*Satan orchestrates multiple disasters for Job, all on the same day. The Sabeans steal Job's oxen and donkeys. Fire from the sky consumes his sheep and shepherds. The Chaldeans steal his camels and slay his servants. Worst of all, a wind blows against the house of his son, and the house collapses, killing every one of Job's children.*

*Job mourns these circumstances, but he worships God all the same. He knows that nothing belongs to him, and all material things will not last. Job does not blame God; he praises Him.*

In the last section, Satan resisted God's assertion that Job was an upright and blameless man. Satan asserted that Job was merely an astute investor, and knew a good deal when he saw one. God had given Job a hedge of protection and blessed his business and family, so Job worshipped God. According to Satan, this is merely transactional. Then Satan asserted that if God removed His protection of Job, Satan could get Job to curse Him to His face.

Now it seems that Satan hatches a plot that is intended to achieve one objective: get Job to curse God. God had provoked Satan that Job was righteous, likely in order to show Satan that he does not have a legitimate right to reign over the earth (Psalm 8:2). We can infer from the lengths Satan goes to in provoking Job that this is a core concern for him.

*Now on the day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, and the Sabeans attacked and took them. They also slew the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you" (vv 13-15).*

We see now that Satan has chosen one of the special feast days to attack Job. It is the day when Job's *sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house*. That it was the *oldest brother's house* might indicate that this was the most special of all the scheduled gatherings. Job would know this was the time of that feast, but was not in attendance. It appears this was a regular habit. Now *a messenger* comes to Job with a report that his *oxen* which were *plowing* and his *donkeys* which were *feeding beside them* were captured and carried away by the *Sabeans*. Further, Job's *servants* attending those activities were slain by *the edge of the sword*, meaning through violent actions. Only this one messenger has *escaped to tell* Job of the event.

Earlier in the chapter, we learned that Job had 500 yoke of oxen and 500 female donkeys (Job 1:3). This was part of the vast possessions that made Job the "greatest of all the men of the east" (Job 1:3). These possessions are now gone, having been robbed by the *Sabeans*, which indicates that the *Sabeans* were reasonably close to where Job dwelt.

It seems that Satan will orchestrate Job's losses so that it is completely clear that there is a divine cause. Satan sequences the bad news that will be heaped upon Job in such a way that Job could make no other conclusion.

*While he was still speaking, another servant also came and said, "The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, and I alone have escaped to tell you" (v 16).*

Job has learned his oxen and donkeys are gone, now he learns that his sheep and related servants have been wiped out. If only the first occurrence had happened, perhaps Job would simply have concluded that the Sabeans had plotted against him. But now *the fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep*. Not only the sheep, but also *the servants* tending the sheep.

This is no coincidence. It is now clear something supernatural is taking place. This would indicate that Satan has some ability to create supernatural events. Revelation confirms this, indicating that Satan will deceive many through signs and wonders in the last days (Revelation 13:13-15, 19:20).

Just as with the first messenger, this one says *I alone have escaped to tell you*. It seems clear that the supernatural agent involved has a special focus on ensuring that Job learns of all these events at once. We know that this is Satan moving, and that Job is the subject of intense interest to the heavenly beings. But Job only knows that he has now lost not only his oxen and donkeys, but also his 7,000 sheep and related employees.

The emphasis to Job that this is a supernatural sequence of events continues:

*While he was still speaking, another also came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three bands and made a raid on the camels and took them and slew the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you" (v 17).*

Now the last of Job's primary financial assets are taken. He had 3,000 camels (Job 1:3). These *camels* are now taken in a *raid* carried out by *the Chaldeans*. This would indicate that Uz was in the general vicinity of Chaldea, also known as Babylon. Just as in the other cases, all the related *servants* were killed in violence, by *the edge of the sword*. And, as with each other instance, the messenger with this news was the only one present who *escaped to tell you*.

At this point we might think that Job was starting to go into shock. He might have thought "I've lost my business but at least I have my family." But that is next:

*While he was still speaking, another also came and said, "Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, 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 died, and I alone have escaped to tell you" (v 18).*

Satan picked the day when Job's children were celebrating at the oldest brother's house. Perhaps this was the greatest of their feasts. The messenger, who like the others was *alone* in escaping to

tell Job the news, gives Job the last and most devastating message: all his children are dead. And the cause was supernatural, as 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 died.*

Two invasions, and two “acts of God” and Job’s entire net worth and all his kids are gone. Job has now gone from being the “greatest of all the men of the east” to someone who has little to nothing. What will he do?

It seems that Satan sequenced the bad news in order to escalate Job’s pain. We know from earlier in the chapter that Satan’s intent is to get Job to curse God to His face (Job 1:11). We must admit that this is a diabolically shrewd plan to accomplish that result. Being mad at and blaming God would certainly be a common and understandable reaction. But that is not Job’s reaction. Job’s reaction proves what God originally asserted, that he is blameless and upright (Job 1:1, 8). Job mourned, but did not blame God. Instead, Job worshipped God:

*Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped. He said,*

*“Naked I came from my mother’s womb,  
And naked I shall return there.  
The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away.  
Blessed be the name of the LORD” (vv 20-21).*

Job does mourn. The act of tearing one’s clothes is a sign of mourning:

- We will see Job’s friends tear their robes as a sign of mourning (Job 2:12).
- Mordecai tore his robe when he learned of Haman’s plan to injure the Jews (Esther 4:1)
- Ezra tore his clothes in mourning over the sin of his people (Ezra 9:5)
- Even centuries later, the high priest tore his clothes to show grief, as a part of his false assertion that Jesus had committed blasphemy (Matthew 26:65)

The shaving of the head is generally associated in scripture with the making of a vow (Numbers 6:18; Acts 21:24). Perhaps Job is showing here not only mourning, but a vow to continue to worship and serve God. This would support the text’s assertion that Job *worshipped*.

Job also *worshipped* by voicing a perspective about the reality of life. Job notes that he came into the world from his *mother’s womb* and was *naked*. This is a way of saying that when Job was born, he didn’t own a single possession. He didn’t have a stitch of clothes. No assets. That is where he began.

But Job goes on to say that he will also *return there* with no possessions. The *there* would apply to being somewhere other than living upon the earth. Just as he came, so he will leave. Job is saying “All these possessions were just passing through my hands in any event—I didn’t have them when I came into the world and I won’t take them with me.” In voicing this, Job is asserting a reality of physical possessions; they are all temporary.

Next, Job also states another reality of life: *The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away*. This is a deep and profound statement of worship, for Job here acknowledges that everything belongs to God, and it is His to give or take as He pleases. We see often in scripture that worship is stating a truth about God, and about reality. Some examples are:

- In Matthew 8:2, a leper is said to worship Jesus by asserting that Jesus can heal him if He desires to do so, recognizing and stating a reality about Jesus's power
- In Matthew 9:18, a ruler is said to worship Jesus by stating that Jesus had the power to raise his daughter from the dead
- In Matthew 14:33, those in the boat are said to worship Jesus by recognizing that He is the Son of God
- In Matthew 15:25, a Gentile woman is said to worship Jesus by recognizing that Jesus has the power to help her, and asking Jesus for help

Job stated a reality about God, that He owns all things and has the right to give and take. But Job also states another reality, that God is God no matter what He does. So Job makes another profound statement of worship: *Blessed be the name of the LORD*.

Job chooses to see reality, state reality, and embrace reality. He is sorrowful (mourning). But he is also committed to continue to acknowledge that God is God, and bless and thank God for whatever circumstances come into his life.

Chapter 1 ends with the profound statement: *Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God* (v 22). Job does not *blame God*, unlike Adam, who when confronted with his sin blamed Eve and God (Genesis 3:12). Job simply accepts that:

- God is God, not Job.
- As God, He can do as He pleases, and still deserves to be acknowledged as God
- Even though Job did not prefer this, he was still blessed to have had a great time and life to that point, so chose to be thankful for it.
- Life on this earth is temporary, and Job can't take anything with him anyway, so this is an acceleration of what is inevitable in any event.

Importantly for the story, the text asserts that *through all this Job did not sin*. God's original assertion to Satan was that Job was "blameless and upright" (Job 1:8). So far, Job is proving God's boast to Satan. Job is, therefore, silencing Satan's assertion of a right to rule (Psalm 8:2). As we will see, Satan will not take to this kindly; Satan is a liar and murderer (John 8:44). He brings death/separation to all he touches. He does not bow to the truth, as there is no truth in him.

Next, God will again provoke Satan with Job's sterling example of being blameless and upright. But Satan will double down on his attack of Job. Poor Job knows nothing of this cosmic reality, where God is using Job as an example of why Satan does not have a right to reign in the earth.

Job does not know he is the focus of heavenly forces, or that his story will be memorialized for generations to come. At this point Job only knows that he hurts, has great loss, but still chooses

to recognize the reality that he is created by God, and it therefore makes sense to bless God for whatever circumstances he is given.

In this, we have an amazing example to follow. We can see that God subjects (what appears to be) his favorite follower, Job, to this great loss in order to make a point to Satan. Job is noted later in scripture as an example of great faithfulness, being placed in the company with Daniel and Noah as an example of a righteous man in Ezekiel 14:14.

It appears this story of Job is part of a great contest to see who has the right to reign in the earth. God originally gave authority to humans to rule over the earth (Genesis 1:26; Psalm 8:5-8). It seems however that Satan gained that reign when Adam fell (John 12:31; 2 Corinthians 4:4). However, Jesus displaced Satan's authority (John 12:31-32; Matthew 28:18).

Hebrews 2 makes the point that it was through the suffering of death on the cross that Jesus restored the right of humans to reign in the earth (Hebrews 2:5-12). It was because Jesus learned obedience, even to death on the cross that He was given all authority in heaven and on earth, as a human (Matthew 28:18; Philippians 2:8-9).

However, we will see that Job gains a great benefit as well. Even though Job sees God clearly for who He is, Job will come to know God in a much greater manner than he did before (Job 42:5-6). We can take from this that the opportunity to know God by faith is such a great blessing that God will allow even His favorite followers to endure great difficulties in order that they might not miss out on even one small part of knowing Him by faith.

In scripture we see, amazingly, that the angels and other spiritual beings are watching believers to understand the "manifold wisdom of God" (Ephesians 3:10). We are also told that the angels long to understand what we as human believers have the opportunity to learn (1 Peter 1:12). This tells us that spiritual beings in God's presence are unable to learn by sight what we have the opportunity to learn by faith.

It stands therefore that we can learn a perspective from this amazing book of Job that can give an elevated meaning to our lives here on earth. This is a once-in-an-existence opportunity to know God, and one another, by faith. The greatest experience of existence is to know God (John 17:3). And this opportunity to know God by faith is, apparently, of such great value that God determined to "ruin" Job, "without cause" (Job 2:3). In doing this, God is silencing Satan, and teaching us that when we choose to bless God regardless of our circumstances, we are gaining the great benefit of coming to know God by faith. This is an opportunity that will pass when we are in God's presence; we cannot believe if we see. We have the opportunity now to gain an immense blessing. As Jesus told us, we will gain a much greater blessing if we believe without seeing (John 20:29).

### **Biblical Text**

**<sup>13</sup> Now on the day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, <sup>14</sup> a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, <sup>15</sup> and the Sabeans attacked and took them. They also**

slew the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”<sup>16</sup> While he was still speaking, another also came and said, “The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”<sup>17</sup> While he was still speaking, another also came and said, “The Chaldeans formed three bands and made a raid on the camels and took them and slew the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”<sup>18</sup> While he was still speaking, another also came and said, “Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house,<sup>19</sup> 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 died, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”

<sup>20</sup> Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped.<sup>21</sup> He said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, And naked I shall return there.

The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away.

Blessed be the name of the LORD.”

<sup>22</sup> Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God.