

# **The Book of Job**

## **The Character of Job**

Lesson #13 for December 24, 2016

Scriptures: Job 1:1,8; 29:7-17; 31:1-23; Exodus 20:17; Matthew 5:16; 7:22-27; Ephesians 3:10.

1. Who was Job? Don't you wish you had a full history of this man? It is estimated that Job lived for at least 200 years. He must have been at least 70 years old to have had that many adult children and to have accumulated that much wealth before the events that we read about in the book. And Job 42:16 says that he lived 140 years after that! Why do you think God chose to challenge the Devil over the case of Job? Job seemed to think that what was happening to him was not at all fair. He was angry and frustrated; but, he stayed faithful right to the end.
2. Did God risk His reputation on Job? What if Job would have caved in? God's judgment depends on His knowing people so well that there is/was no chance of His being wrong. Is that possible? Could God make a mistake in His judgments in the final pre-advent judgment taking place right now? Satan thought God had judged him in error?
3. As we read through the book of Job, it is possible to pick up bits of information here and there about Job's earlier life. So, this lesson will dwell on what Job was like and what we might be able to learn about his life before he lost everything.
4. Read Job 1:1,8.

How good and how faithful was he? First, the text tells us that he was "perfect." This word does not have to mean "sinless," as was Jesus. It comes, instead, with the idea of completeness, integrity, sincerity, but in a relative sense. The person who is "perfect" in the sight of God is the person who has reached the degree of development that Heaven expects of him or her at any given time. The Hebrew word for "perfect," *tam*, "is equivalent to the Greek word *teleios*, which is often translated 'perfect' in the [New Testament] but which is better translated 'full grown' or 'mature.'" —*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 499. Job's later experiences revealed that he had not reached the ultimate perfection of character. Though faithful and upright, he was still growing.

Second, the text says he was "upright." The word means "straight," "level," "just," "right." Job lived in a way that he could be called "a good citizen."

Third, the text says he "feared God." Though the Old Testament portrays the idea of "fearing" God as part of what being a faithful Israelite was all about, the phrase also was used in the New Testament for Gentiles who faithfully served the God of Israel (see *Acts 10:2, 22*).

Finally, Job "eschewed," or shunned, evil. This characterization of Job was affirmed by the Lord Himself, when He said to Satan, "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?" (*Job 1:8*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Sunday, December 18. [Brackets and content in brackets are in the *Bible Study Guide*.]

5. If the book of Job were about you, how would the opening line read?

6. It is clear that Job's life before and after the experience we read about in this book was as comfortable as possible given the situation in which he lived. He said, "My steps were bathed with cream." (Job 29:6, *NKJV*) He talked about God watching over him, (Job 29:2) and he talked about the way he cared for others less fortunate than himself. (Job 29:8-11)
7. Job clearly fulfilled the description that Christ gave of the saved in Matthew 25:31-46. He was constantly caring for orphans, widows, the blind, the poor, and the hurting.
8. Job 29:7 tells us that he was one of the most respected members of the community; when matters of civic importance came up, he was always welcome to be a part of the group discussion. But, it is also true that those most despised by society loved and respected him. The poor, the perishing, the blind, the widows, the fatherless, and the lame were helped by him. Think about Jesus for a moment. Who was it that despised Jesus and wanted to kill Him? It was the so-called "saints" that we recognize as Pharisees! So, who was it that loved to be around Jesus and wanted to stay close to Him? The worst of sinners, the prostitutes and the tax-collectors! Why was that?

God has given in His word a picture of a prosperous man—one whose life was in the truest sense a success, a man whom both heaven and earth delighted to honor.—Ellen G. White, *Education* 142.1.

9. It is easy for most of us to be kind and respectful to our peers and even to those we consider to be above us in social status. But, how do we treat those who have almost nothing and cannot in any way pay us back? (James 2:1-7)
10. Read Job 31:1-23. On first reading, you might get the impression that Job was bragging. But, that kind of behavior was not looked up to in Job's day. Remember that Job was being accused of being a terrible sinner. So, he felt it necessary to recount some of his previous experiences of which several of them were probably already aware. Don't you think that his friends already knew that about Job? He avoided even the thought of evil and turned away from every temptation. There is plenty of evidence that God judges people by the innermost motives of their hearts and not just by their outward appearance. (1 Samuel 16:7; Exodus 20:17; Matthew 5:28) Can we know the motives of someone else? Or, is that for God alone to know?
11. Read Job 31:13-15. It is often the case that someone as wealthy as Job can treat his workers in a less than respectful way. But, Job recognized that all human beings are created equal. And he treated even his employees as he would have wanted to be treated himself. (Matthew 7:12) That was an amazing understanding, considering the time in which Job lived. How many employees did Job have? We do not know; but, Abraham who lived about the same time had a lot! Abraham had 318 trained soldiers who presumably protected his flocks and herds. (Genesis 14:14)

Abraham's household comprised more than a thousand souls. Those who were led by his teachings to worship the one God, found a home in his encampment; and here, as in a school, they received such instruction as would prepare them to be representatives of the true faith. Thus a great responsibility rested upon him. He was training heads of families, and his methods of government would be carried out in the households over which they should preside.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* 141.1.

12. Most of the people in Job's day believed that if one could conquer his enemies and destroy them, he should do so if he really believed he could! Other people were to be looked down

upon and trampled on, if possible. But Job's attitude was very different.

13. Read Job 31:24-34. These verses give a great deal of insight into the character of Job. He did not boast or take advantage of others because of his riches. He refused to worship anyone or anything other than the true God of heaven. He never gloated over the misfortunes of his enemies, and he never prayed for their demise. He did not even try to hide his sins as many others do. Would you like to live next door to someone like that? When we get to heaven, what kind of people will we live next door to?
14. In what ways do you think Job's prior life prepared him to live through the incredible experiences we read about in this book?
15. Read Matthew 7:22-27. Wouldn't we respect a Christian who had driven out demons and performed many miracles? In our day, there are many who call themselves Christians. But, are they really? Is their foundation built on solid rock? Or, is it built on the sands of other peoples' opinions? How many people depend entirely on the pastor for their religious knowledge and experience? Job had conquered his selfishness and other kinds of temptations in many ways in the past. (Luke 16:10) It was his faithfulness in small matters that made him capable of meeting that great temptation.
16. In order to face what we believe is coming at the end of this world's history, do we need to be preparing as Job did? Absolutely! We have previously suggested that there are some interesting parallels among the story of Job, the ministry of Jesus, and the experiences of the 144,000 who will live through the final events of this world's history. Can you think of some of those parallels? In each case they felt or will feel abandoned by God. They had prepared for what was coming by developing a very close relationship with God. That relationship proved to be key to their success in living through and learning from their experiences.
17. Job 22:3 (GNB) says: "Does your doing right benefit God, or does your being good help him at all?" That was the question raised by Eliphaz earlier in the book. What an incredible question! Given what you know from Job 1&2 and through most of the rest of the book, would you say that Job's behavior benefitted God in any way? The whole universe had focused on the case of Job!
18. One of the questions that has been a problem for God in His arguments with the Devil is the question: "God, where are your people? Where are the saints who are living faithful and upright lives on planet earth?" And in the case of Job, God was able to say, "Here is my upright and blameless friend!" In the immediate context of the book of Job, Satan claimed that Job would not remain faithful; God said he would. So, who was telling us the truth? Who was the correct Judge of Job's character? Job's faithfulness was a huge benefit for God. Does this story then become a kind of microcosm of the cosmic conflict?
19. Read Matthew 5:16. How many of the lives of the Seventh-day Adventist Christians that you know bring glory to God?
20. Read Ephesians 3:8-10. What could the universe possibly learn about God from a group of so-called Christians living here on planet earth? They have learned how God deals with sinners and rebels! They have learned that love is more important than live itself!

The very image of God is to be reproduced in humanity. The honor of God, the honor of Christ, is involved in the perfection of the character of His people.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 671.3; *LHU* 191.4; *OHC* 154.3.

21. Wouldn't you agree that God's honor was definitely involved in the demonstration of the

character of Job? Can you think of some respects in which your life brings glory to God?

22. The issue of justification versus sanctification has challenged theologians for hundreds of years. It was a major issue at the time of the Protestant Reformation. So, which brings more honor to God? Our justification? Or, our sanctification? Can you have one without the other? Was Abraham justified only? Or, was he also sanctified by his relationship with God and following God's instructions for his life? (Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:3) What is sanctification? It basically means to live a life set apart from the world. It means living a holy life. And we read in Hebrews 12:14 (GNB): "And try to live a holy life, because no one will see the Lord without it." Can we actually learn to live truly loving lives? It will be like that in heaven.
23. God called for His people coming out of Egypt thousands of years ago to be holy. Leviticus 19:2 (GNB) says: "Be holy, because I, the LORD your God, am holy." How does that actually work? Could we actually be changed to become more and more like God? The *Handbook of SDA Theology*, page 296, says: "Sanctification is a progressive process of moral change by the power of the Holy Spirit in cooperation with the human will."
24. We give God the opportunity to make the necessary changes in us by spending time in Bible study and prayer. By witnessing to our neighbors and friends, we discover why we need to continue studying!

Christ is our pattern, the perfect and holy example that has been given us to follow. We can never equal the Pattern, but we may imitate and resemble it according to our ability.—*Ellen G. White, Review and Herald*, February 5, 1895, par. 7; *That I May Know Him* 265.2; *CTr* 204.5; *YRP* 369.4.
25. So, what choices do we need to make in 2016 and 2017 that will bring us nearer to God? Can our hearts be really changed? Read Colossians 2:6 (GNB): "Since you have accepted Christ Jesus as Lord, live in union with him."
26. Could we as a church—not just as individuals—actually be lights to the world and correctly represent God? What might that say to the onlooking universe? Think of the times when whole stadia full of people are given color-coded placards and on a cue they all hold them up. No one individual shows anything significant; but, the whole group produce a picture. Will the 144,000 be like that, in some way representing God?
27. Now that we have studied most of the book of Job, does Job inspire you? Challenge you? Or, discourage you? Have you lived around some people who seem to do mostly what is right all the time? Did they make you feel uncomfortable? Is there a secret formula for living that kind of life?
28. How does a Spirit-filled Christian fit in with the world in which we live? If we actually behaved like Job did before this whole experience, do you think people would be attracted to us? Do people appreciate goodness in our day? Look at John 13:34-35.
29. Read Job 29:12-16; 31:16-22. Is God humble? Would that contribute to His glory? In what ways has your church been eyes for the blind, speech for the dumb, transportation for the lame, etc.? Are you always available? Are you willing to feed the poor and hungry? Do you clothe the naked? Are you ever smug when your enemies suffer? Have you ever, even partially, wished that they might die? Do you try to hide your sins? Job said that he did not!
30. Consider what we learned last quarter when we talked about the church in the community. Now consider what we have learned about Job's prior life. Have you gotten any good ideas about how to reach out to others?

31. Is it possible that the kind of moral life that Job lived was actually practiced in ancient times? Or, were they too busy fighting wars and killing each other?
32. In 2008, an archaeology student who was involved in the *Khirbet Qeiyafa* excavation in Israel—the very spot where David killed Goliath—came across a big shard of pottery that had writing on it. The writing seems to be ancient Hebrew script. It is now believed that this piece of pottery has the oldest Hebrew inscription ever found; it dates to the 10<sup>th</sup> century B.C., the time of King David.
33. That was, of course, probably about 1000 years after Job. But, it gives us a clue. After carefully photographing and analyzing the characters on that pottery:

Prof. Gershon Galil published a proposed reconstruction of the inscription:

you shall not do [it], but worship the [Lord].

Judge the sla[ve] and the wid[ow] / Judge the orph[an]

[and] the stranger. [P]lead for the infant / plead for the po[or and]

the widow. Rehabilitate [the poor] at the hands of the king.

Protect the po[or and] the slave / [supp]ort the stranger.

[http://qeiyafa.huji.ac.il/ostracon12\\_2.asp](http://qeiyafa.huji.ac.il/ostracon12_2.asp) posted “7 January 2010” as accessed October 28, 2016. [Brackets and content in brackets are in the source on the website.]

34. What does this piece of pottery tell us about the lives of at least some of God’s people in ancient times? Did they really protect the poor and the slave? Plead for the widow? Judge the orphan? Rehabilitate the poor? Plead for the infant? And support the stranger? Does that sound like the people that you read about in the Old Testament? Continuing from the same website:

A press release by Haifa University states: “This text is a social statement, relating to slaves, widows and orphans. It uses verbs that were characteristic of Hebrew, such as `asah (“did”) and `avad (“worked”), which were rarely used in other regional languages. Particular words that appear in the text, such as almanah (“widow”) are specific to Hebrew and are written differently in other local languages. The content itself was also unfamiliar to all the cultures in the region besides the Hebrew society: The present inscription provides social elements similar to those found in the biblical prophecies and very different from prophecies written by other cultures postulating glorification of the gods and taking care of their physical needs.

The contents of the text express social sensitivity to the fragile position of weaker members of society. The inscription testifies to the presence of strangers within the Israeli society as far back as this ancient period, and calls to provide support for these strangers. It appeals to care for the widows and orphans and that the king—who at that time had the responsibility of curbing social inequality—be involved. This inscription is similar in its content to biblical scriptures (Isaiah 1:17, Psalms 72:3, Exodus 23:3, and others), but it is clear that it is not copied from any biblical text.”

[http://qeiyafa.huji.ac.il/ostracon12\\_2.asp](http://qeiyafa.huji.ac.il/ostracon12_2.asp) as accessed October 28, 2016.

35. Would you say that Job lived the kind of lifestyle emphasized on this piece of pottery?
36. Based on what you have learned in this lesson, how did Job measure up with your idea of

perfection? Maturity? Is your idea of biblical perfection correct?

37. Read Matthew 5:48. The Greek was probably most correctly translated into English by Edgar J. Goodspeed in his 1923 *American Translation* when he said: “You are to be perfect just as your father in heaven is perfect.” The Greek, like the English in this expression could mean: “You must be perfect”; but, it also could mean: “You will be perfect.” It is very likely that the original statement by Jesus intended both. It is an admonition, and it is a promise.

The Hebrew *tamim* means “complete, right, peaceful, sound, wholesome, or blameless,” whereas the Greek *teleios* means “complete, perfect, full-grown, mature, fully developed, and having attained its purpose.”—*Adult Teacher’s Sabbath School Bible Study Guide 173.*

38. Let us not deceive ourselves into thinking that Enoch, Noah, and Job never sinned. See Genesis 9:21; 20:2; and Job 31:33.
39. How is the work of Christ related to our understanding of perfection? If we over-emphasize the role of Christ, we may reach the place where we feel that following His example is impossible. On the other hand, if we take the substitutionary approach to faith and salvation, we can fall into what could be called “cheap grace.”
40. But, if we realize that we will continue to grow in grace for the rest of eternity as we learn and observe the life of Christ with the assistance of the angels and the Holy Spirit, we will continue to see our lives molded to become more and more like Jesus Christ. (Compare John 15:5; 1 Corinthians 1:30; Ephesians 3:19; **4:13**; and Philippians 2:12-13.)
41. Should Christians become involved in civil matters? Should a Seventh-day Adventist Christian become a politician? This has been hotly debated in some circles. In some countries politics and religion seem to go hand in hand. In other parts of the world, Christianity forms—in some peoples’ opinions—a kind of fortress where they keep the enemy out and keep themselves in! However, as we have suggested in this lesson, the Bible suggests that we must be socially sensitive. This is especially true with regard to those most disadvantaged among our neighbors. So, how are we helping the poor, the fatherless, the widows, and the disabled, etc.? In our day, would that include migrant workers, asylum-seekers, HIV/AIDS sufferers, drug abusers, the racially oppressed, etc.? Would interacting with them in ways similar to what Job did impact our righteousness and our fitness for heaven?
42. Read Job 1:5; Hebrews 4:14-16; John 17; and Ephesians 6:18. In Job 1:5 we see a clear example of Job exercising his intercessory prayer. Is that something we need to be doing more often?
43. Read Job 31:1. What does it mean when Job said he made a covenant with his eyes? The amount of data processed by our brains inputted through our eyes each day is almost incomprehensible. How do we filter out what is bad? And keep what is good? In our day where data is packaged in soundbites and every kind of attractive message is used to sell things, is it possible to have a clear contract with one’s eyes? Could a person actually live a Job-like life in our day?

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