

A Guide To The Reader

Pastor recommends that to obtain maximum benefit from his comments you read in full from the Bible every reference whenever one appears. Otherwise the reading of the comments is simply a skimming over the surface. They are rather designed to make you stop and meditate and even look up further references as the Holy Spirit guides you. Do pray before you read that the Holy Spirit will be your Tutor and that the time you spend will be time spent with Him.

Job 1

1.1-3. After the flood the first mention of Uz (as well as Buz and Aram (Job 32.2)) is in Genesis 22.21 where it is spelt Huz. He was the firstborn of Abraham's brother Nahor. In the beginning place names were often named after the person who first settled there. We are told in Lamentations 4.21 that the descendants of Edom dwelt in the land of Uz.

From the outset it is emphasised that Job is considered "perfect." In the scriptures, when it does not refer to God, it means one who is observed by Him to be "in Christ" and whose sins therefore are considered blotted out.

The expression "men of the east" refers to the Edomites and their rulers.

1.4-5. Whether it was the custom in the land or simply the magnanimity of Job's sons to entertain in the way described we do not know. The expression "every one his day" could either mean "in turn" or on a birthday or anniversary. Whenever this happened, early the next day, Job invariably called them together and offered burnt offerings for them all. He acted as their priest. We know that he himself believed in the efficacy of the sacrifice as representing the coming sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, but whether his sons and daughters did is another matter. Perhaps we are to infer from Ezekiel 14.20 that Job delivered but his own soul by his righteousness.

At all events Christ is the fulfilment of the sacrifice. His atoning death is the believer's burnt offering. We cannot believe on another's behalf and each person must enter in at the strait gate (Matthew 7.13-14).

What goes on in another person's heart is unseen and unknown unless it spills over into words and deeds. But clearly Job understood, for himself and others, that the thoughts of the heart have to be atoned for as well as words and deeds. The Lord Jesus Christ said, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity" (Matthew 23.27-28).

1.6-12. The scene shifts to heaven and we are given a picture of the angels (see 38.7 where the sons of God must be angels for no man had yet been created) formally presenting themselves and reporting to God Himself. Satan is seen to have already fallen in his heart and one can imagine with what reproach the words of God came across to him that Job, a mere man, was “ a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil” precisely those characteristics that Satan had forfeited. So he has to defend himself by imputing his own desire to curse God to Job. Inasmuch as the mission of angels is “to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation” (Hebrews 1.14) this, presumably, had been Satan’s business as he went to and fro in the earth, walking up and down in it. God, being aware of his hostility towards them whom he was supposed to serve, tried him to bring out of him his underlying and festering hatred.

Now there is nothing inherently wrong in Job trusting the Lord because he has received nothing but multiplied good at His hand. Except that as a sinner he might be supposed by Satan, reflecting Satan’s own proclivity, to be looking for a benefit independent of God’s provision for him. Of course Job loves such a providing God. It is only if he desires those providences for his own ends that he would be angry to be frustrated in them, as Satan was himself frustrated, and curse God as Satan himself cursed God in his jealous heart.

You might think what an enormous risk God was taking in putting Job to such a test and giving Satan such power. But Satan’s power was curbed by His very word “only upon himself put not forth thine hand.” And, though it is not mentioned, God had appointed Job for this very thing. Without his knowing it he was entrusted with it and would not fail. “He knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold” (23.10).

1.13-19. So Satan went about his nefarious work and soon the day came, perhaps the next time there was a scheduled feast day at the eldest brother’s house was the day he actually fixed upon, when his logistics became plain. Sabeans, Chaldeans, imitation lightning and wind combined to wreak death and destruction on Job’s interests alone; precise even to the sparing of exactly one person (a servant) in each case for better effect. Satan exercised his remit as far as he could push it. He had been commanded not to touch Job’s person but he causes the death of his children and the majority of his servants. “All that he hath” must be stretched to include them too! And maximum significance must be put upon **all** that he hath.

1.20-22. James writes (5.11), “Ye have heard of the patience of Job” and encourages believers to be like him, “Take, my brethren, the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure” (James 5.10-11). Not happy, perhaps, in the modern sense of the word, but smiled on by God and therefore in line to receive better things

than we know. “In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly” (22). In other words he did not blame God at all for what had happened though he knew it could not have happened other than as part of His eternal purposes.

We see here that Job was not heartless but felt these things keenly. He observed the signs of mourning because these things matched his heart’s feelings. But one thing was paramount. To worship the Lord first and foremost even in an ultimate situation such as this.

He had experienced the enjoyment of family and possessions and if they are removed the pleasure had been his. He entered the world with no possessions and thus he would leave it. But in between, to say nothing of the personal endowments with which he was born, the Lord’s blessings had been multiplied and therefore thanks were to be returned even in grief and desolation.

An old saying is apt here. “It is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all.”

If this is how Job reacts, “where shall the ungodly appear?” “The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?...Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator” (1 Peter 4. 17-19).