

The Joban Prologue (1:1 - 2:13)

I. (1:1-5) Scene One: Introducing Job

A. From the land of Uz

1. Location of the land is a mystery
 - a. Uz appears as an Aramean (Gen 10:23)
 - b. Uz is also associated with the Edomites (Lam 4:21)
 - c. The Hebrew consonants for Aram and Edom look similar
 - 1) אֲדָם (Paleo-Hebrew: 𐤀𐤃𐤌) - Edom
 - 2) אֲרָם (Paleo-Hebrew: 𐤀𐤕𐤌) - Aram
2. Possible word play.
 - a. It sounds like the word for "counsel" in Hebrew
 - b. This, along with Job being from the east suggests that he is a wise man

B. Impeccable character (1:1)

1. Blameless תָּמַם *tām* from the root, תָּמַם *tmm*
 - a. Def: Perfect, complete, sound, wholesome, having integrity, morally innocent
 - b. Examples of the use of תָּמַם
 - 1) Psalm 25:21 - "integrity"
 - 2) Psalm 37:37 - "blameless"
 - 3) Gen 6:9 - "blameless"
 - 4) Exo 12:5 - "without defect"
 - 5) Prov 1:12 - "whole"
 - 6) Deut 32:4 - "perfect"
2. Upright יָשָׁר *yāsār*
 - a. Def: Upright, straight, just, level
 - b. Examples
 - 1) Psa 25:8 - "upright"
 - 2) 1 Sam 29:6 - "upright, reliable, or honest."
 - 3) 2 Kings 18:3 - "right"
 - 4) Prov 14:11 - "upright"
3. He feared God
 - a. This phrase denotes one who is devoted to God
 - b. Deut 10:12; 13:4 - Fear, love and obedience all appear as a single thought in these passages
 - c. Prov 1:7; 9:10 - Fear of God is the beginning of wisdom
4. He turns away from evil

Prov 16:6 - Fear of God results in turning away from evil

C. Wealthy

1. Seven sons and three daughters
2. Thousands of livestock

3. Many camels, which were a sign of being distinguished
4. Many servants
5. Greatest of the men of the east
6. Prov 3:5-10 - The implications of this verse demonstrate that Job is a wise and righteous man blessed by God

D. Offered up offerings regularly for his children

1. This was for a sin they "might" have committed, cursing God in their hearts
2. This implies that Job's sons had a similar character to their father

E. Job was exemplary in every way

1. The image in this first paragraph is idyllic
2. Nothing seems to be out of place, everything is just as it should be

II. (1:6-12) Scene Two: The adversary comes before God along with the sons of God

A. The council

1. The "sons of God"¹
 - a. This phrase can refer to heavenly beings
 - b. It also can refer to humans, though that is obviously not the case here.
2. Psalms 89:6-7 has the same imagery, that of a council of heavenly beings before God

B. The adversary

1. In Hebrew it is הַשָּׂטָן "the satan" rather than שָׂטָן "Satan"
2. The word "satan" appears to be a description rather than a proper name
 - Definition: Adversary (sometimes in a legal context)
3. Places where the word, שָׂטָן "adversary" is used
 - a. Num 22:22-23 - Used of the angel of the LORD
 - b. 1 Sam 29:4 - Used of David
 - c. 2 Sam 19:22 [23] - Used of the sons of Zeruiah
 - d. 1 Kings 5:4 [18] - Used of human enemies
 - e. 1 Kings 11:13, 23, 25 - Used of Hadad and Rezon
 - f. 1 Chr 21:1 - Used of a supernatural being²
 - g. Job 1-2 - Used of a supernatural being who comes before God with the "Sons of God."

¹ This phrase appears rarely in the Old Testament: Sons of Elohim: Gen 6:2, 4; Job 1:6; 2:1; 37:8. Sons of Elim: Psalm 29:1; 89:6 [Heb 7]. Sons of the living El: Hos 1:10 [Heb 2:1].

² This is the only time

- h. Psalm 109:6 - Used of an accuser³
- i. Zech 3:2⁴ - Used of a supernatural being at God's right hand⁵
- 4. The function of an adversary
 - a. An military or legal opponent
 - b. An adversary could also refer to a kind of official watcher⁶
 - c. There is no developed view of Satan in the Old Testament as there is in the New Testament
 - 1) Isaiah 14:12-17 and Ezekiel 28:11-19 - The context of these verses demonstrate that these are not references to the Devil
 - 2) The Old Testament seems to emphasize the human dimension of sin and evil in the world, while the New Testament seems to emphasize the cosmological dimension through highlighting of malevolent spirits such as the Devil.
- 5. Identification of this particular adversary in Job
 - a. This adversary does not appear to be God's archenemy as in the New Testament, particularly in Revelation.
 - b. This adversary speaks only when spoken to, which is appropriate in the council of God
 - c. The identity, function, and place of this adversary in the cosmos will become evident through the book of Job
 - d. The book of Job gives a different perspective on the adversary

C. The bragging

- 1. God asks the adversary where he had been
 - a. The adversary roams about the world
 - b. God does not rebuke or condemn him
- 2. God asks the adversary if he had considered his servant Job
 - a. God is not asking for information
 - b. God appears to be bragging about Job
- 3. God's assessment of Job is identical to the narrators
 - a. This is no exaggeration
 - b. Job is exemplary to the point where God claims there is no one like him

D. The contest

³ Most English Bibles render this "accuser" rather than "adversary," which fits with the context since the adversary is an adversary at law in this case

⁴ Like Job, the word "satan" here appears with an article, "the satan," or "the adversary," demonstrating that this is a description or title rather than a proper name.

⁵ This would be a strange place for an enemy of God to stand, which may indicate that this adversary serves God in a particular role.

⁶ In Daniel 4, the watchers and holy ones who give the decree against Nebuchadnezzar may reflect a sort of royal spy system.

1. The adversary claims that Job's motives are not pure
2. The adversary claims that God's fence around Job and all his possessions is the source of Job's piety
 - a. God's fences meant health and prosperity for Job
 - b. The adversary tells God to "touch" all that he has and Job would curse⁷ him to his face
3. God's response
 - a. God did not tell the adversary, "Okay, I'll do it."
 - b. God told the adversary, "...all that he has is in your power..."
 - c. The adversary did not ask to afflict Job, yet God grants him permission to do so

III. (Job 1:13-22) Scene Three: Job's first calamities

- A. Every sign of Job's prosperity is systematically wiped out
 1. Sabeans stole the oxen and donkeys and killed the servants
 2. The fire of God came from the sky and killed the sheep and the servants
 3. The Chaldeans robbed the camels and killed the servants
 4. A wind storm destroyed the house where his children were at and killed them all
- B. Job's response
 1. Tore his robe and shaved his head, signs of mourning
 2. Fell down and worshipped God
 - a. Acknowledged he came into the world with nothing, and will now exit the world with nothing
 - b. He blessed the name of the Lord
 3. Job did not sin or charge God with wrong doing
- C. Nagging questions
 1. Some readers might look at this and think there is nothing wrong with the story
 - a. Job didn't curse God and sin
 - b. Everything is as it should be
 2. Those who have lived through a horrible senseless tragedy might react differently
 - a. Why did God afflict Job on the basis of a wager?
 - b. If God knows Job's character, why did he allow such a monstrous test?

⁷ The Hebrew text literally says בֵּרַךְ "bless" rather than "curse," as a euphemism. Which demonstrates the seriousness of cursing God to the point that no one wanted to utter the very words "curse God."

IV. (2:1-6) Scene Four: The adversary comes before God along with the sons of God again

- A. God repeats his boast concerning Job
 - God also points out that Job persists in his integrity
- B. God takes responsibility for the affliction on Job
 - 1. "Although you incited me against him to destroy him for no reason"
 - 2. People typically want to attribute Job's suffering squarely on the adversary, but God takes it squarely on himself
 - 3. What do the words "for no reason" mean?
 - a. The Hebrew, **לְרֵיֶקֶט** means "without cause" or "for nothing"
 - b. The adversary had accused Job of serving God NOT without cause, for selfish reasons
 - c. Satan's accusations are for nothing, as Job had demonstrated that the adversary's accusations appear to be baseless. We learn nothing new about Job's piety. He is still blameless and upright.
- C. The adversary is still not convinced that Job's piety is not selfless
 - 1. The adversary quotes a proverbial saying, "skin for skin"
 - a. There is disagreement as to what this actually means
 - 1) Similar in form to and "eye for eye"
 - 2) Some translate this "skin upon skin," meaning that the adversary figuratively is peeling back layers of skin to see what Job is really made of
 - 3) Others see this as a reference to skins of animals used for bartering, and therefore Job is willingly accepting the loss of his animals and children to save his own life
 - b. Whatever the meaning of this proverb, it is clear that the adversary is still accusing Job of being self serving
 - 1) Everything a man has he will give up to save his life
 - 2) The adversary accuses Job's "worship" of being nothing more than attempt to escape the calamity that came upon his children and his livestock.
 - 2. The adversary proposes a better test
- D. The second contest
 - 1. The adversary challenged God to "touch his bone and his flesh"
 - a. In Hebrew thought, the bones were the seat of health
 - b. Job's person had escaped unscathed
 - 2. The only way to truly know if Job's piety is selfless is to make him think that he himself will die as his children did

3. Once again, the adversary does not ask permission to do anything, he challenges God to do it
4. Once again, God grants the adversary the task of testing Job
5. Once again, God places limits on the adversary
 - a. He can afflict Job's body, but is not allowed to kill him
 - b. God's choice of words is curious
 - 1) God tells the adversary to spare **שָׁמַר** Job's life
 - 2) **שָׁמַר** means to watch over, guard, or keep
 - a) Gen 2:15 - Man was to "keep" the Garden
 - b) Gen 3:24 - Cherubim "guards" the entrance
 - c) Gen 4:9 - Brother's "keeper"
 - d) Ps 12:7 - You O Lord will "protect" us
 - 3) This is not an activity that seems typical of the adversary

V. (2:7-10) Scene Five: Job's Debilitating Disease

- A. The adversary strikes Job head to toe with loathsome sores.
 1. 2:8 - Job apparently had puss filled sores that oozed
 2. 2:12 - The sickness apparently disfigured Job
 3. 7:5 - Job's sores became filled with worms
 4. 7:13-14 - His fever came with bad dreams and sleeplessness
 5. 19:17 - Job had putrid breath
 6. 19:20 - Job suffered severe weight loss
 7. 30:17 - Job is in constant pain
 8. 30:27 - Job may have had diarrhea
 9. 30:30 - Job's skin died and fell off, and he had a fever
- B. There have been those who have attempted to identify Job's disease
 1. It appears Job may have had a combination of diseases
 2. By design, these diseases had the purpose of causing the most amount of damage without killing Job
 - a. Physical torment

Job was so sick that he could get no rest or relief
 - b. Emotional torment
 - 1) Job's sickness had made him repulsive
 - a. Many would want to distance themselves from someone who suffered so much calamity
 - b. Job 30:1 - Even the disreputable people distained Job
 - 2) Even Job's wife seemed to have abandoned him
 - c. Spiritual torment
 - 1) In the culture, sores or boils were often seen as a sign of divine disfavor

- 2) Biblical examples: Exod 9:8-12; Deut 28:35
- 3) It appears that the adversary wanted Job and everyone to know that his suffering came ultimately from God

C. The reaction of Job's wife

- 1. Do you still hold fast your integrity?
 - a. Did she truly believe Job's integrity?
 - b. She apparently thought that there was no hope of recovery for Job
 - c. She may have believed that Job was delusional
- 2. Curse⁸ God and die
 - a. This seems harsh
 - b. There are those who suggest that this is an act of compassion to help put Job out of his misery
 - c. If she believed in the principle of reward and retribution, then she may have believed that the loss of her prosperity and her children was due to some sin of Job's
 - d. What appears to be from Job's and his wife's standpoint
 - 1) God has turned against Job
 - 2) What good does it do to remain pious?
 - 3) If Job were to curse God so he could die, he would prove the adversary right, that he was self-serving

D. Job's response

- 1. To his wife
 - a. Her suggestion was foolish
 - b. "Shall we accept the good from God and not the bad?"
- 2. Job did not sin with his lips
 - a. Unlike the first round of testing, Job does not worship God
 - b. Job suffers alone in silence on the ash heap
 - 1) Ash heaps were where people burned trash
 - 2) Sitting on ash heaps was a way of mourning
Isa 47:1; Jer 6:26; Ezek 27:30
- 3. Job remains pious even though it looks like he will gain nothing from it

E. More nagging questions

- 1. Since God had already admitted that the first test was for nothing, and that Job had passed the test, why a second test?
- 2. Why did God allow the adversary to conduct the test? Why didn't God do it himself?
- 3. Why did the test have to involve so much suffering?
- 4. Why allow Job to think that God has angry with him?

⁸ As in the adversary's speech, the Hebrew word used here is "bless" בָּרַךְ

VI. (2:11-13) Fifth Scene: Job's Friends, Eliphaz, Zophar, and Bildad come to comfort him

- A. They wept and sat with Job as friends
- B. For seven days, no one spoke a word

VII. Reflections on the Prologue

- A. Does anything really seem out of place in the prologue?
- B. What questions and issues are lurking under the surface?