

### The Poetical books - Job:

**Tonight's question:** Explain the 5 steps to maturity as depicted in the Pentateuch, and how do you understand the 10 dangers to faith as depicted in the Historical Books?

The entire purpose of the revelation of God's Word and the entire ministry of the Holy Spirit in interpreting, illuminating and teaching us, is wasted if we do not begin to grow into mature human beings, if we do not begin to discover the possibilities that God has for us in his great plan. This is what the Scriptures are for.

This is why there is so much shallowness in Christian life today - because there is inadequate *preparation*. The plowing has been left undone.

The first five books of the Old Testament, the Pentateuch, develop the pattern of God's work with men. Each of these books shows us a part of the *program of God*. These 5 books show us the way God works over and over again in human life - and God will not deviate from this:

- **Genesis** is the book which reveals the *need of man*.
- **Exodus** reveals the *grace of God*, the redeeming work of the Holy Spirit.
- **Leviticus** is the book of worship, of approach, of *access to God* - the book which teaches people how to live with God in their midst.
- **Numbers** is the book of *wandering*, of the desert experience - the ups and downs so familiar to many of us in our Christian lives.
- **Deuteronomy** is the book of *helplessness* and of obedience in depending upon God - the book which corresponds to the sixth chapter of Romans, where we have the preparation of the heart to enter into the promised land of rest in the work of Another.

We are now going to look at the third section of the Old Testament - these are the five *poetical books*: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon.

Although we call these books "*poetical*," it doesn't mean they rhyme. It means they have a structure of repeated ideas. This is the form of poetry the Hebrews used. They are marvelous books of *expression*. The poetical books are a reflection of the rejoicing and the protests of man in response to life. These books show all the feelings of the heart, the yearnings and desires of men and women.

*Hopefully we all understand that man is a threefold being. These five books show what man is so they fall into three divisions which correspond to the makeup of man - the **spirit**, the **soul** and the **body**.*

We will start with the book of Job, which reflects the needs of the *spirit* of man - the poetry of the spirit. Job is the oldest of the books of the Bible and it is the deep protest of the spirit of man in the face of apparently senseless suffering.

Whenever we experience directly (or indirectly) a *senseless* tragedy, we all should find ourselves asking "*Why?*" We feel some protest against this kind of thing an anger at

this kind of tragedy.

The book of Job faces this problem squarely. It tells what the answer is, for here is the cry of a tortured man who cannot understand the ways of God.

The story of Job is a rather simple story. It begins in heaven with an encounter between God and Satan. Satan comes and challenges God, and God challenges Satan in return and calls his attention to a remarkable man named Job who lives in the land of Uz (*Most Biblical scholars place the time of the book of Job between the 11th and 12th chapters of the book of Genesis - way back in the history of man.*)

**[Read Job 1:8]**

Satan doesn't challenge that statement, but he raised a question about it.

**[Read Job 1: 9b-12a]**

After this came one tragic event after another. An invading army took away all of Job's wealth. A wind storm destroyed his house; his children had been gathered in it, and they were all killed. Everything was swept away in one day.

But Job was absolutely unmoved. He bowed in sorrow before God, but his heart was open to him. [Read Job 2:6] Satan made that famous statement, "*Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has will he give for his life.*" In other words Satan was saying: "*You haven't touched him deeply enough yet!*"

The result was the terrible outbreak of boils on Job. Scripture tells us he was covered with boils from the top of his head to the soles of his feet. So poor Job took a piece of pot with which to scrape himself, and sat on ashes. In absolute misery he faced the situation in which he found himself - the cry of a tortured man who cannot understand what life has done to him.

All this was made worse by the visit of his three friends. Job's friends have become famous. There is a well-known saying: "*With friends like this who needs enemies.*" However they were very comforting at first. They sat there for seven days and seven nights and never said a word. They sat in silence, suffering with Job. However each one after this gave a long speech, which in each case alleged that suffering is a *result of personal sin* in his life. Each one tried to get Job to confess the sin which they thought must be the reason behind this terrible suffering.

*There are many people like that today insinuating that suffering is because of some terrible sin you are not willing to reveal.*

Job replied as well as he could, but his agony was only increased by these men. Then there came a fourth young man, who modestly said he had kept silent as long as he could. *We meet men like this today - speakers who cannot keep silent.* This young man's argument was that sickness or suffering is a form of *God's discipline*, intended to bring us back into fellowship with Him.

Then, in **Job 38 & 39**, God himself appears and takes up the argument of Job.

**[Read Job 38:2-3]**

God asks if Job can answer any of several simple questions - and we should also try to answer these questions ourselves!

**Chapters 38 and 39 of Job** are an examination in natural history and are one of the most remarkable passages in all literature. God begins with this simple question (**Job 38:4-7**) and then moves on to more difficult questions (**Verses 12, 17a 19, 28**)

When God is through, Job is totally humbled. **[Job 42:6]**

If you read Job (*and hopefully you will*) you will discover that Job is actually **Romans Chapter 7** in another form! How does Paul end that chapter? **[Read Romans 7:24]**

This is the message of Job: *We must learn that apparent punishment or suffering at "God's hand" is but the way by which He teaches us that man by himself is helpless, that he can do nothing without God. God is sufficient for every circumstance of life. All man needs is God, and God only!*

When we come to this place in Job (*or Romans 7*), then we are ready to declare along with Paul his words in **Romans 8:1-2 & 4**)

This is where Job ended up. When Job realised this, God in tender grace and mercy, poured out blessing upon him and Job entered into what is the equivalent of a "**Romans 8 experience**." If you would like to understand the book of Job, read Romans 7 and 8 and if you want to understand Romans 7 and 8, read the book of Job.

*Next week we will start to look at the book of Psalms, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. Who are the authors of these 3 books and of all the Psalms, what is your favorite one and why? (If you have a favorite part of Proverbs or Ecclesiastes that is fine as well!)*