



# Bible Readers Club

Covenant Presbyterian Church

Week

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Job 1-21

Job 22-43

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Dear Friends,

The Book of Job begins a major section of the Old Testament called the "Writings." This is where we find poetry and works of wisdom responding to the story of God's people found in the rest of the Old Testament and grappling with the deep issues of life. Job offers a very old story, from the time of the Patriarchs (Abraham, etc.), which centers around the question of human suffering in light of the goodness and power of God.

Important in Job is the context of the "two stages." One is the "heavenly stage" which the reader knows about but those who live and move on the other "earthly stage" do not. In heaven we see God allowing Satan to trouble Job in order to prove Job's faith and to glorify Himself. Job, his family and his friends know nothing of these things.

There are two key moments that happen on the "earthly stage" in the Job narrative. The first is when, after calamity upon calamity has come down upon him, Job's wife tells him to "*curse God and die*" (2:9). In essence, she is suggesting that Job sever his relationship with God and be done. And this is the one thing Job will not ever do. He will complain bitterly to God of His seeming unfairness. He will call God to account, asking Him to show up in court so Job can make his case against Him. He will cry out in agonizing pain, but he will do it all in a continuing relationship, strained as it may be, with The Almighty. This is the secret to Job's wisdom. He remains connected to God.

Job's friends will offer their comfort and wisdom, but in their long speeches they will reveal themselves to be more lost than Job, desperately trying to hang on to their beloved rules, asserting that Job must have done some very wrong things to deserve such torture, so they can maintain a sense of righteous control over life circumstances and

over God Himself and thus guarantee that no such calamities will befall them.

The second key moment occurs when God, at long last, consents to respond to Job's call for justice in the court of heaven.

*"Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge?*

*Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me."* (38:2-3)

When God says "Brace yourself," He is inviting Job to find something solid to hang on to in the face of the absolute power of God's voice speaking to him. What is solid enough for this purpose? What can hold up against the power of God Himself? Only God Himself! I've always heard this opening to God's speech for Job to be a powerful invitation for Job to keep doing what he has been doing all along: *Hang on to me!* Hang on to me, for nothing else will do. Then God proceeds, in language as magnificent as any found in all human literature, to remind Job that He in fact is God and Job in fact is not. Yahweh God never does tell Job why he has suffered. He never knows, at least in this life, that he was God's champion against the separating and destructive lies of Satan. Job, wisely hears God and responds in humble faith.

*"Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know.*

*My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself*

*and repent in dust and ashes."* (42:3, 5-6)

This is not a statement of self-hatred, but rather a cry of worship to the Holy God of All Creation. Job admits he was wrong and turns away from any foolish thought that he is in any way superior or equal or even comparable to the Living God. And then the story concludes with the happy-ending epilogue where Job's friends are rebuked and forgiven, his family is reestablished and his fortunes are more than restored.

Read well the old story of Job, a story for people who are suffering, a story for people who will not curse God and die despite worldly pain and confusion, a story for people hanging on to God because they know there is nothing else that will prove solid against every other force that would blow us away.

- Pastor Jay