

Soldier Up!

Saints & Spiritual Warfare

"Satan the Hedge Hog"

Job 1&2

I could have written *God's Not Dead*. Sort of.

My very first day of classes, in my very first class at UC Riverside, Professor Bernd Magnus, chair of the philosophy department, opened his lecture by stating that Christianity had failed. As proof he offered the two horrific World Wars of the 20th century. Certainly no 'good' God would allow anything like that.

I wasn't a believer at the time so I bought into it.

A few years later, after I got saved, I felt a strong leading to go back and see another of my philosophy professors, James Biffle, and share Christ with him.

He respected me, so he tried to keep his disdain to a minimum. His big argument against God was the fact that God would allow Satan to devastate Job. Professor Biffle understood it was a test of faith; he simply objected to pain, suffering, and affliction as being in any way compatible with a 'good' God.

If you've seen *God's Not Dead*, you know it hinges on the suffering that the philosophy professor endured when, as a twelve year old boy, he watched his mom die of cancer.

Let's agree with most scholars and say Job is the oldest book of Scripture. It's subject matter: "Why, God, if You're good, do You allow evil?"

It's as if God is saying, "Let's get into the problem of pain, and of evil, and of whether or not I am both almighty and good, right now, right from the start."

Job 1:1 There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil.

Job 1:2 And seven sons and three daughters were born to him.

Job 1:3 Also, his possessions were seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred female donkeys, and a very large household, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the East.

Job 1:4 And his sons would go and feast in their houses, each on his appointed day, and would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them.

Job 1:5 So it was, when the days of feasting had run their course, that Job would send and sanctify them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, "It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." Thus Job did regularly.

Great saint. Great dad. Great citizen.

Job 1:6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them.

The word "satan" is used most frequently in the Old Testament, not as a *name*, but as a *noun* that means "accuser." In three places - here in the prologue of Job, and in Zechariah 3:1-2, and in First Chronicles 21:1 - the word refers to a celestial being.

Literally, in Job he is called "**the** satan," **the** accuser, describing his behavior. Eventually the Bible drops the article and simply call him Satan.

"Sons of God" is a title for angels. Chapters one and two of Job describe two scenes in which Satan, along with other angels, present themselves before God in Heaven.

Does it blow your mind that Satan has access to Heaven? That he and God have a dialog? It's definitely not the pop culture view of the devil as the ruler of Hell.

Job 1:7 And the LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" So Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it."

If you think Satan is a tourist, consider what Peter said about him: that he goes about on the earth as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

Job 1:8 Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?"

Job 1:9 So Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing?"

Job 1:10 Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.

Job 1:11 But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!"

Two important truths are understood from this encounter:

1. The first is that Satan is a malevolent enemy, seeking the destruction of God's saints.
2. The second is that God is almighty. He can put a "hedge" of protection around His saints, and Satan must have permission to get through, over, under, or around that hedge.

Job 1:12 And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person." So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

This is where it gets dicey. When God gives permission to breach the hedge, we balk.

Job 1:13 Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house;

Job 1:14 and a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them,

Job 1:15 when the Sabeans raided them and took them away - indeed they have killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you!"

Job 1:16 While he was still speaking, another also came and said, "The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them; and I alone have escaped to tell you!"

Job 1:17 While he was still speaking, another also came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three bands, raided the camels and took them away, yes, and killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you!"

Job 1:18 While he was still speaking, another also came and said, "Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house,

Job 1:19 and suddenly a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people, and they are dead; and I alone have escaped to tell you!"

This is all the devil's doing, in opposition to God. While clearly subordinate to almighty God, he nevertheless wields vast power over nature and over ungodly men.

Job 1:20 Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped.

Job 1:21 And he said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD."

Job 1:22 In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.

Job came through it with his faith intact. That's not to say his heart wasn't broken; or that he didn't have moments of despair. Only that he looked above his circumstances to Heaven.

Job 2:1 Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD.

Job 2:2 And the LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it."

Job 2:3 Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil? And still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause."

Job 2:4 So Satan answered the LORD and said, "Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life.

Job 2:5 But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face!"

We have a relentless enemy, bent on our spiritual destruction.

Job 2:6 And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your hand, but spare his life."

There it is again. Permission to breach the hedge. Satan can only act within boundaries. It's just that the boundaries seem too lax.

Job 2:7 So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD, and struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.

Job 2:8 And he took for himself a potsherd with which to scrape himself while he sat in the midst of the ashes.

Job 2:9 Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!"

Job 2:10 But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

Before commenting any further, let's note that three characteristics of Satan here in Job continue in the New Testament:

1. I've already mentioned one - that he roams the earth as a roaring lion seeking humans to devour (First Peter 5:8).
2. The second is that he accuses Christians before God's throne, and we see that in Revelation 12:10.
3. The third is that Jesus describes Satan as desiring to sift Peter, and presumably other believers, as wheat, similar to what he did against Job (Luke 22:31).

Job is thus an ancient story that repeats itself in each of our lives to some degree.

We call the effort to resolve the problem of pain and evil, theodicy, from Greek *theos* "god" + *dike* "justice."

I reject any answer that makes God the author or the initiator of evil. One thing Job teaches us is that God is *not* mysteriously behind all the evil, pain and suffering in this world.

A malevolent being has that distinction. Nothing that happened to Job was initiated by God.

If you think that God, by giving permission, initiates or is the author of evil, you're mistaken. The fact that God can, and does, set hedges, ought to show us what His attitude toward suffering is. It is to prevent it; it is to minimize it.

Satan doesn't seem to be God's instrument, or servant, as some theodicies would suggest. No, he is an antagonist, an enemy.

Still, the question remains - Why relax the hedges?

I'm realizing, as I get older, that there isn't any one, single answer.

Free will is an important part of any theodicy that rejects the idea that God is the author or initiator of evil. The Bible seems to present free will as the culprit, first in the rebellion of Satan and one-third of the angels, then in the disobedience of Adam and Eve.

So I would definitely say that evil exists because God created beings with free will to obey Him or disobey Him; and it was necessary to do so since love requires free will or it ceases to be love. And because of the nature of God's creation, the resolve for sin and suffering required God to come as a man, and that took time to unfold through human history.

Free will only gets us so far. As one author puts it,

Understanding why God made free beings goes a long way in answering why evil in general is allowed to take place. **But it doesn't address the mystery of why particular evils happen to particular people. It doesn't answer the age old question, "Why me?"** Nor does it answer why God seems to miraculously answer prayer sometimes but not at other times. Why does everything in life, including God's interaction with us, seem so arbitrary?

Job can help us with that, but we won't like the answer.

God answers Job from a whirlwind by listing things Job cannot do, and cannot begin to comprehend. He goes on for several chapters.

Example:

Job 38:1 Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said:

Job 38:2 "Who is this who darkens counsel By words without knowledge?

Job 38:3 Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me.

Job 38:4 "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding.

Job 38:5 Who determined its measurements? Surely you know!
Or who stretched the line upon it?

Job 38:6 To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its
cornerstone,

The answer given *to* and *by* Job is that God's ways are
incomprehensible unless He definitely reveals them to us.
Meanwhile we know that He is both almighty and good, so the
proper response to suffering is faith that endures.

We also see in Job that God can redeem everything that happens
to us, making all things work together for the good, when we read,
at the end of the book,

Job 42:12 Now the LORD blessed the latter days of Job more
than his beginning...

That's not to say that everyone who suffers will see, in their
lifetime, the good that God is working together in redeeming their
situation. Half of the super-saints listed in the Hall of Faith, in
Hebrews eleven, died without receiving anything resembling
"good" on the earth.

Job probably never imagined it, but how many multiplied millions
of people have benefited from his story?

We are almost glad that God moved the hedges in Job's life,
because we can draw strength from it. Job never knew what had
occurred in Heaven. He had no reason to think that his tragedies
would instruct anyone after him. No explanation was offered him,
except that God's ways are incomprehensible.

We are more like Job, in that we will most likely not see the reasons,
or receive the explanation, or make the connections.

Job had to be content with coming to a greater knowledge of God than he had previously; which he did, exclaiming,

Job 42:5 "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You."

One author called this "the theodicy of theophany." A theophany, in the Old Testament, was a visible appearance of God, most often in a human form. Often these were actually Christophanies - appearances of Jesus before His incarnation.

In his pain, God spoke to Job out of the whirlwind; God appeared to him as a theophany.

In the end, **our** theodicy is a theophany in this way: We see Jesus in a deeper, fuller way as He walks with us, yoked with us, in the fellowship of suffering.