



## Introduction to *Job: Satan Takes a Hike*

Many people consider Job to be the most troubling book in the Bible. No other book confronts the reader with God's sovereign priorities as bluntly as Job does. There's no explaining away what it says.

That's painful to deal with but stick with it and the rewards are great. A deep study of Job can produce profound growth.

Understand Job and you understand a lot.

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We're pleased to provide *the DEEP* studies in PDF format at no charge. We hope you will find them helpful and encouraging as you press on in your journey toward spiritual maturity in the Lord.

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Thank you.

Job: Satan Takes a Hike  
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## 1 Introduction – Job 42:10-17 (ESV)

*And the Lord restored the fortunes of Job, when he had prayed for his friends. And the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. Then came to him all his brothers and sisters and all who had known him before, and ate bread with him in his house. And they showed him sympathy and comforted him for all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him. And each of them gave him a piece of money and a ring of gold.*

*And the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning. And he had 14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, 1,000 yoke of oxen, and 1,000 female donkeys. He had also seven sons and three daughters. And he called the name of the first daughter Jemimah, and the name of the second Keziah, and the name of the third Keren-happuch. And in all the land there were no women so beautiful as Job's daughters. And their father gave them an inheritance among their brothers. And after this Job lived 140 years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, four generations. And Job died, an old man, and full of days.*

The book of Job bothers people. They're troubled by the ending – where Job is blessed with more children and other things. “What about his first children?” they say, “They're still dead.”

His blessings at the end are nice, but let's not kid ourselves. It's hard enough to replace a pet dog. You can't replace a child, and this book doesn't suggest that you can. That wouldn't just be wrong; it'd be offensive. Job has a much deeper message.

There's a lesson people need to learn before the day comes when they need it. God's ways are higher than our ways – and we're not smart enough to understand them.

But you can't learn that while you're in pain and doubting everything you thought you knew. You have to study it while your head is clear, and you can work through the hard questions without getting overwhelmed.

The creator is much more powerful than the kind of God who might, say, live on Mount Olympus. Creation is absolute power, including power over all the rules – plus dominion over time. Thus God concerns Himself with things that we don't even have a clue about.

In this book, God teaches this to Job, and to us, through an incredible sequence of events.

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The point of this book is to teach humility. Let's get a head start.

Everyone has plenty of reasons to be humble. We're sinners and we've done things we regret. One of the great things about grace is that we don't need to be in denial. Being forgiven means we can be honest with ourselves. This healthy attitude helps us learn from our mistakes.

Spend a few minutes recalling why you need God's grace. Don't obsess on your flaws – you're forgiven – just be humbled by them and prepare to watch Job be humbled too.

## 2 Job 1:1-8 (ESV)

*There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil. There were born to him seven sons and three daughters. He possessed 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, and 500 female donkeys, and very many servants, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the east. His sons used to go and hold a feast in the house of each one on his day, and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. And when the days of the feast had run their course, Job would send and consecrate 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 children have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts." Thus Job did continually.*

*Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. The LORD said to Satan, "From where have you come?" Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it." And 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, who fears God and turns away from evil?"*

Notice that God initiates everything. He starts the conversation with Satan and asks him where he's been. Satan responds with, "*From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it.*" This has an in-your-face feel to it. He's bragging about something. But what?

Then God brings up Job. How is that a response to Satan's bragging?

Using Scripture to interpret Scripture, we know that this world is Satan's kingdom (Matthew 4:8-9 & 12:26, Luke 4:6 & 11:18, John 16:11, and 1 John 5:19). He's bragging about his freedom to wander anywhere he wants to. It's all his. But how does Job's uprightness counter that?

Because this all traces back to the fall in the Garden of Eden. Satan is trash-talking about his big take-over. He's saying his victory is perfectly complete.

God's response is like, "Well, not exactly." This really tweaks Satan's nose. Even a smidgen of righteousness means that Satan's victory isn't final. (Ha! Little does he know.)

An all-knowing God is setting up the events to come. He's manipulating Satan.

But this means that the pain and suffering to come are all according to God's holy purposes. It's not "the best God could work out under the circumstances."

God created the circumstances.

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This is another lesson in humility. God's power is not just potential power. Everything in Scripture points to God's active presence. He's omnipresent and perfectly attentive. When bad things happen, we want to deny God's involvement. That's not going to work here.

But what about the bad things in our own lives? How can they possibly be part of God's plan?

That is the question. As you read through Job, ask God to help you see the answer.

### 3 Job 1:9-12 (NIV)

*“Does Job fear God for nothing?” Satan replied. “Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But now stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face.”*

*The LORD said to Satan, “Very well, then, everything he has is in your power, but on the man himself do not lay a finger.”*

*Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.*

The scary thing is that Satan has to ask for permission to attack Job – and God gives it.

While Satan is the father of lies, lying to God would be pointless. Satan is right when he claims that God has put a hedge around Job. That hedge is keeping Job safe. Like a dog in a dog park, Satan looks like he’s running around free, but the fences are really in control.

But now, for His holy purposes, God has opened the gate and Satan is free to attack Job. The implications of this are pretty frightening. Is Satan always constrained by God? Are all his attacks expressly allowed by God?

Scripture says, “Yes.”

*“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.” – Luke 22:31-32 (NIV)*

That’s even scarier. Jesus is not only saying that Satan got permission to sift Simon as wheat, but that He prayed, not for Simon to be spared the trial, but for him to pass it.

The implications for the doctrine of God’s sovereignty are huge. Everything that happens – everything – is under His authority.

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The implications for prayer are huge too. We tend to pray for trials to end quickly or to be avoided entirely. But if every trial is pre-authorized by God, shouldn’t we be praying differently?

While we all want to avoid suffering, but it’s pretty obvious that God’s agenda is something else. Jesus’ suffering on the cross makes that clear. That doesn’t mean we have to abandon our desire to avoid suffering in our prayers, but it does mean we should be mindful of other things.

If trials have a purpose, consider that when you pray. One typical prayer might be, “Lord, help me learn what you’re trying to teach me, so we can end this nightmare.” It’s even OK to scream, “Is there a point to this?!” Just be yourself and recognize that there is a point.

4 Job 1:13-19 (ESV)

*Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, and there came a messenger to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, and the Sabeans fell upon them and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you." While he was yet speaking, there came another 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." While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, "The Chaldeans formed three groups and made a raid on the camels and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you." While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, "Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, and behold, a great wind came across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young people, and they are dead, and I alone have escaped to tell you."*

Since we know that Satan is doing all this, what does “*the fire of God*” mean? It appears to be a colloquialism for lightning.

So, Satan has the power to make lightning. He has power over the wind too.

*While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, "Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, and behold, a great wind came across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young people, and they are dead, and I alone have escaped to tell you."*

We underestimate him. Satan is a much more fearsome enemy than we'd like to believe.

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Insurance policies have clauses in them about “acts of God.” It’s nice to see the Lord recognized in legal documents, but they’ve actually got it wrong. The things they call acts of God can be acts of Satan (or even lesser demons).

This is chilling. We’re pawns in a war. Prayer is the only weapon with any power over the Devil. No house is strong enough to withstand his attack. No location is beyond his reach. No insurance policy can protect you against the loss.

But the Lord answers prayer. We need eyes to see the spiritual warfare behind the events in our lives. Never forget to pray, especially before disaster strikes.

*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. — 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (ESV)*

Waiting until you’re under attack, and then praying for deliverance, is a bit late.

5 Job 1:20-22 (ESV)

*Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."*

*In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.*

Most people wouldn't charge God with wrong either, but for a totally different reason. They wouldn't think God had anything to do with it. They might pray to God for help, but it wouldn't occur to them to blame Him for what happened.

But Job understands who God is and what His relationship with His creation is. He doesn't view God as some "benevolent uncle." So, when the disaster strikes, he knows what's going on.

And Satan must have been aware of this. Otherwise his claim that Job would curse God wouldn't make sense. Most folks would have cursed the weather and the Sabeans.

But how does he know? The only information Satan is given is that Job is upright and blameless.

There has to be some connection. Satan intuitively understands that anyone who is upright and blameless knows that things don't "just happen."

Righteousness and holiness go hand in hand, and knowing God is essential to holiness.

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What Job said and did is sublime but notice what he didn't do. He didn't ask God for anything.

Imagine something like this happened to you. (It could, if a hurricane hit just right.) What would you pray for?

I can't imagine that I would react as maturely as Job did, but I should strive to grow in that direction. But how?

The lesson in today's passage is that uprightness and blamelessness don't come from trying to behave better; they come from knowing God better. And one of the keys to knowing God is recognizing his full power and authority in all things.

Another key is being in His word daily. The following other devotionals are recommended:

My Utmost for His Highest

Our Daily Bread

Search the Scriptures

6 Job 2:1-8 (ESV)

*Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the LORD. And the LORD said to Satan, "From where have you come?" Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it." And 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, who fears God and turns away from evil? He still holds fast his integrity, although you incited me against him to destroy him without reason." Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life. But stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face." And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life."*

*So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and struck Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. And he took a piece of broken pottery with which to scrape himself while he sat in the ashes.*

Notice the phrase, "you incited me against him." That seems like an odd way to describe what just happened. I'd expect God to say something like, "He still holds fast his integrity, though you destroyed him."

No, God clearly takes full responsibility for everything, as if Satan's only role was to "incite" Him.

That's because Satan is just a stooge. He has no idea where this is going. He was wrong about Job's reaction to his first trial, and he's about to be wrong about the second one.

Satan is nothing more than a puppet. He's unaware of how minor his role is. He thinks he has struck massive blows and that he's some big time player in an epic drama.

But Satan is about to be hit with the ultimate put-down – he's canceled. God just writes him out of the script. Job 2:7 is the last mention of Satan in the whole book. His claim that Job would curse God is forgotten. Satan is a nobody and God treats him like an extra in a movie. No one's interested in what happens with him next. The camera is following the action and just pans away.

The fact that this whole plot line is unceremoniously dropped shows that Satan's claim about how Job would react is not what this book is about. It's just a pretext. The real action and the real point of the book are yet to come.

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God is the God of surprises on so many levels. Given the action so far, one might wonder if the point of all of Job's suffering is to tweak Satan's nose and to prove him wrong.

But why would God care about that? He can do anything he wants with Satan, including uncreate him retroactively. No, God has something far less boring in mind.

We have little understanding of God's plans. Even when we think we know what God is up to, He can break out the next layer at any time.

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. – Proverbs 3:5-6 (ESV)*

*Questions for reflection or discussion*

1. This book is about coming to grips with those things in life that don't make sense. What is most troubling to you? Does this attack your faith? If so, how do you deal with it?
2. Have you ever had something "bad" happen that you later realized was actually good (for a good purpose)?
3. Have you ever had a prayer that was redirected – where you intended to ask for one thing but ended up on another track? How did that turn out? Could you figure out, in retrospect, what the Holy Spirit was up to?
4. Have you ever detected or experienced something that you thought was spiritual warfare? How did you pray in that situation? What happened?
5. How is your devotional life? Do you pray consistently? What about? Do you have a daily devotional? What works for you?
6. Do you struggle with letting go of trying to understand everything and just letting God run His universe? Where do you draw the line between things you should keep trying to understand and things you should just accept?

*Items for prayer:*