

Job Chapters 1-2 – John Karmelich

1. Are there forces working behind the scenes controlling our lives? The story of the book of Job is essentially a bet between God and Satan over whether or not a man named Job would curse God if his life became unbearably bad. What's interesting about this story is Job himself has no idea of the bet and that fact is never revealed to him. An underlying issue for us to ponder is how much of our life consists of good and evil forces pulling the strings? Is our life strictly based on our own decisions and choices? The answer is we don't know. If we accept that God and Satan both exist, then this possibility is real. The related question is if we have no clue if such a thing is happening, do we blame someone else for how our life turns out or just accept the "cards we are dealt in life?"
 - a) Now if that isn't a strange way to open the study of a bible book, I don't know what is.
 - b) To explain how this book relates to our lives, it's best if I start by giving the background of this book and then explain how it affects our lives. Let's get started.
2. The book of Job is mostly a discussion between a man named Job and three of his friends over the issue of why Job had to suffer so much. The first two chapters tell us why that suffering occurred, but neither Job nor his three friends are privileged to that discussion. We have no idea how Job himself is even aware of the opening scene between God and Satan as that information is never revealed to Job in the story. Most of the book focuses on the issue of how Job deals with the fact that Job lost everything he owned, was now living in horrid pain and the question focuses on "who's to blame" for that situation. Job's three friends essentially say, "Job, you must have ticked God off pretty bad to be stuck in this situation." Job's essential response is I don't understand the reason for this, but can't think of anything I did wrong, but stuck I am, so I must accept my fate.
 - a) After many chapters of this debate, a new character comes in the story, to tell Job and his three friends that they're all wrong and they must learn to accept the "cards they're dealt in life". Then all of a sudden God shows up on the scene and says in effect, "Hey Job, who do you think you are to question My motives? Where were you when I made everything? Are you smart enough to even question Me?" After all of that, without any explanation of why Job had to suffer, the book ends with the restoration of everything he lost. There's no explanation of how Job's life got restored to the way it was before this started. Further Job is never told why he had to go through what he went through.
 - b) Most people think of the book of Job as a story of "Why does man have to suffer?" If that's what the book is all about, that question never gets answered. To me, the book of Job is to give us a realization that our lives are far more than what we accomplish in life and more than what happens to us in life. It's about the fact that spiritual forces exist, who have the power to manipulate things to accomplish some goal we're not aware it. That fact doesn't mean we're to give up trying to live the type of life God wants us to live, it just means we must accept the fact that such forces exist and "we're playing in their backyard" and those forces have the right to try to manipulate our lives for some greater purpose.
 - c) To explain further, it's necessary to understand the motivation of those forces. The reason God created us in the first place, is because He's full of love, He wanted to create things to express that love upon. That's why human life exists in the first place. We got made with the purpose of not only surviving and living, but also to glorify God by our lives. Yes, He paid the price for our sins by Himself, that way we don't have to earn His love. We simply trust in what He did for us and then figure out what gifts God's given us and use them to glorify God by how we live our lives. OK, that's Christian theology 101. Time "for "102".
 - i) If God knows all things, then He must have a purpose for Job to go through all of this suffering. Part of it is to have this "play" laid out for us so we can learn of life behind the scenes that affects our lives. The reason God allows Satan and demons to "do their worst" is simply to show us that His power is greater than Satan's and if are willing to trust in His power, we need not fear what demons can do to us.

- ii) The reason Satan wants us to turn against God and not be a good witness for Him is it delays the amount of time before Jesus returns. It is also Satan's way to prove to God that "we're not worth it", if we choose to turn from God's will for our lives.
 - iii) The reason God allows Satan to do his worst, is in effect to show us that the power God gives us is greater than all power that Satan has.
 - iv) OK John, if all of that is true, why did God allow Satan to hurt Job as bad as he did in this story? An underlying question of this book is if God's power is obviously a much greater power than Satan's, why does God allow "an equal playing field" on earth? If God loves us so much, why does He allow so much suffering? Why does He allow Satan to rule over this world and why do we exist in "Satan's backyard", as I jokingly refer to this world?
 - v) Part of the answer is God wants to see if we're still going to choose Him in spite of the "card's we're dealt in life" and in spite of whatever our fate in life is. In my life I've had the privilege of meeting many financially successful people and not one of them can take that success into the next life with them. What matters in this life is not how much money we make or how much fame we achieve, but how we used the most valuable thing God's given us, our time, and did we use it to glorify Him with our lives? The way to achieve joy in this life is to realize we were designed to use our lives to glorify God with our lives. That's how we overcome the fact we're playing in "Satan's backyard" and achieve eternal joy. It's by realizing the game is a lot bigger than who we interact with in our lives. Yes, I'm saying that entities do exist that "pull the strings" in our world. If we can't control what we can't control than all we can do is make the best of whatever situation we've been dealt with in life and use our lives to make a difference for God as that's why we were created.
3. With that speech out of my system, let me run down the who, what, when and why's of the book and then I'll get started on the story itself. One of the frustrating things about the book of Job is it doesn't give much background on the where or when. It's as if God wanted us to realize that this story could take place anywhere at anytime, so the location itself is a mystery. There are clues in this story, that tell us it takes place in the Middle East. Nomad groups are named that existed east of Israel. Most scholars date this book to around the time of Abraham, based on the life spans we read in Genesis and the life spans we read of in the book of Job. Those of us who believe that the life spans listed in Genesis are literal, base it on the idea that the atmosphere was different before the flood and after that happened, life spans decreased to what they were today. Since none of us were there, all we can do is look at the scientific evidence and draw the best conclusions possible based on that evidence.
 4. So how did the book of Job make it to the bible? Don't know. Speculation is that maybe Abraham or even Moses got a hold of this story. When the Old Testament was put together and canonized, it was accepted as bible worthy and legitimate. We do know it goes back before Israel existed as a nation simply because there is a lack of any mention of "Israel" as a nation or entity in this story. Bottom line is I'd argue it predates the first five books of the bible, as we know it terms of when it was written, but we don't know much else about who Job was or even how his story became part of the bible. The story is what is and God put it here for us to understand some of the things that are happening "behind the scenes" of our lives.
 5. With that said, this lesson covers the two chapter "background story" of why Job suffered without the main characters in this book aware of this story. Another mystery is how did this story get to be a part of the main story? Some scholars argue that this book is fiction as Job had no knowledge of God and Satan's bet. However, those same scholars can't explain how God appears in the final chapters of this book to say in effect, "Hey Job, who make you think you've got a right to question Me in the first place?" My point is that if God communicated to Job, somehow and someday then He must have also communicated to Job the opening chapters so we know about the bet God and Satan have in this story. Bottom line, Job somehow found out about the bet after it was all over.

6. One more thing before we start the text itself. Some people see the book of Job as a play that can be performed. That's because most of the book is a dialogue between Job and his three friends. A final big scene involves Job being lectured by God. My point is if you've read this book before the first two chapters read like an introduction before the main story begins. These two chapters read like an announcer explaining the story, before it actually begins. I'd ask we keep that fact in mind as we read through the first two chapters.
7. Oh, I forgot to give my lesson title if you haven't figured it out by now: "Who's pulling the strings of our lives and what can we do, and can't do about it." OK, then Verse 1:
8. Chapter 1, Verse 1: In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil.
 - a) As I read this verse, my first thought was, OK, where is Uz? Yes I googled it. The answer is southeast of Israel, which would be the southern edge of Jordan today or the north part of what is Saudi Arabia. OK, time for my first "who cares" question? A historical mystery is how did this book make it into the bible? One possible answer is the Israelites traveled through that area when they came from Egypt to Israel. More importantly that informs us Job wasn't an Israelite but was from the Middle East.
 - i) We get more clues that Job wasn't Jewish simply by the fact there are no references to the nation of Israel or the temple. That's why I'm convinced Job lived before the great exodus from Egypt to Israel. Again, "best guess" is he lived about the time of Abraham, based on the length of Job's life (coming up later in the book), compared to how long other people lived at that time.
 - ii) I should also add I'm convinced Job was a real person. Ezekiel 14 claims Job was a real person who was an example of a Godly person (coming up in the next point.) He is also referenced in the New Testament in the book of James (Chapter 5).
 - b) The next thing we read is that Job was "blameless and upright and that he feared God and shunned evil". All that means the text is setting up the fact that Job was a godly man. We are not to assume that Job was perfect and never sinned. In fact, we'll discover Job under the stress of all the pain he suffered, did do things we might consider a sin. What we're to understand is simply the fact that Job did his best to live as God desired him to live and in moments where Job might have sinned, he confessed it and turned from it.
 - c) Bottom line time again: The book's setting up Job to be a God fearing man.
9. Verse 2: He had seven sons and three daughters,³ and he owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred donkeys, and had a large number of servants. He was the greatest man among all the people of the East.
 - a) We get our first clue as to Job's age in this verse. He and his wife had 10 children. We will read in a few verses that those children were grown up and each lived in their own homes in this story. I'm guessing Job was a "grandpa" at this point, or at least he was old enough that all of his children are now out of the house and on their own.
 - b) The next thing we realize is that Job was wealthy. The text does not give us any clues that Job was some sort of political leader, but simply a man who acquired a lot of wealth in his life. I've seen a few western movies where one name was prominent in a town. That's how I picture Job. To have a ranch with that many animals with lots of servants needed to take care of them, would require a significant amount of land. Visualize enough land to take care of all those animals plus houses to hold the workers, and you get a picture of all the land that's needed.
 - i) The only other thing I'd like you to keep in mind about this part of the story is the epilogue to the book has God restoring all that Job's about to lose here (which is all the stuff mentioned in these verses). The spoiler alert is Job literally gets double of all these animals. It's as if God says in the epilogue, "I know Job that I allowed you to go through all that suffering, but I'm making it up to you later". Yes Job doesn't have any clues to this yet, but keep the "farm size" in mind when the book ends.

- c) Finally the text says he was the "Greatest of all the men of the east". The bible tends to see things from an "Israelite" perspective. "East" is east of Israel. Think of it as an ancient way of describing the Middle East. This story is about to mention God and Satan by name so it gives us a clue that even though Job was pre-Israel the story "thinks Jewish". Just as those early chapters of Genesis mention characters who feared God, even though the concept of Israel as a nation didn't exist then, Job fits that bill as one of those pro-God characters that we read of in Genesis. Even at that time to think "east" was the Middle East as we think of it today. OK then, meanwhile back to the story introduction.
10. Verse 4: His sons used to take turns holding feasts in their homes, and they would invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. ⁵ When a period of feasting had run its course, Job would send and have them purified. Early in the morning he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, thinking, "Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." This was Job's regular custom.
- a) Before we get into the "heart" of the introduction chapters, we have two more background verses here about Job's life. The short version is each of the seven sons would have parties once in a while (I suspect on their birthdays). They got along well enough with all of their siblings to invite them to their parties. That gives us a clue that Job and his wife would be considered "Godly parents" as their children turned out well. It's also another clue God is blessing Job's life, as we're about to discuss in a matter of verses.
 - b) We talked about the fact that Job was wealthy. To have wealth in the bible isn't considered a sin. It's also not a requirement to be saved. The big question about wealth is what're we doing with it? Later in the book we'll discover how Job helped others. My simple point is Job didn't just kick back at home all day while his servants ran the farm. The text here tells us that after each party, Job made a sacrifice to God to cover any accidental sins for any of his children. I should explain that one better:
 - i) No we can't forgive sins by ourselves. The idea of a sacrifice was to show remorse for what we've done wrong. It's a little like the idea of us turning from an activity we realize isn't pleasing to God. My question is if the kid's might have sinned, is a sacrifice by "dad", going to make it better? Yes and no. The answer is "no" simply by the fact that each of us are accountable to God for our lives. The idea of "yes" is simply the fact that Job still cared about his grown children and wanted to make a sincere effort to trust God no matter what happens to the children. Job's sacrifices were his way of saying, "I still care about my children, but since they're no longer living under my roof, the best thing I can do is "pray" for them to use their lives to make a difference for God. That's why I see Job as performing those sacrifices.
 - c) Keep in mind that the five verses we read so far are simply there to set up the background of the story we're about to read. The "real story" begins in Verse 6. Let's begin:
11. Verse 6: One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them. ⁷ The LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it."
- a) The first thing we learn in this verse is that God "holds regular meetings" with angels over what they're assigned to do. I have no idea how often those meetings take place. My view of angels and demons is they're not "all-knowing" creatures. They have an ability to travel back and forth between our world and God's world, with the intent of reporting to God of what they've been assigned to do. If God desires a world of justice and a world where we show love to others because of our trust in who He is, angels are dispatched to give God a report on occasions about what's happening. Yes angels can get involved in our lives if it's God's will to let them get involved. My view is angels work behind the scenes of our lives to enforce His will and His desire for our lives. We can't force angels to appear or do what is our will. They're not here to do our will, but God's will. Still, I'm convinced they are all around us and a world exists we can't see with angels and demons all around us.

- b) Meanwhile, we learn that Satan is part of these regular meetings. I don't know if what he says gets priority over angels, we just know he's part of them. Realize that the word Satan means "accuser". That means God allows Satan to roam the earth so he can be in charge of accusing us of our sins before God. Think of Satan as the "prosecuting attorney" when we stand before God. That's also why Christians argue that God Himself has to pay the price for the sins we're guilty of. It's as if we say in our defense, we are guilty of all the sins that Satan claims we commit. However, we accept Jesus payment for all those sins. That's how we avoid hell in the first place.
 - c) Another thing that's implied by these verses is that Satan can't be everywhere at once. He can travel quickly, but he's literally not hiding behind every rock as we go down the road. At the same time, I'm convinced there is a world all around us with battles between God's forces and Satan's forces with people being both the "prizes and pawns" in this game. The reason God allows "equal playing field" on earth is God wants to see if we still chose to be one of His despite whatever demonic forces through at us
 - d) There is a quote by C.S. Lewis I like on this topic. He pondered, "Why does God allow the righteous to suffer?" He then answered with, "Because the righteous are the ones who can handle it!" I know the saved and unsaved alike suffer in this life, but I like that quote.
 - e) OK, now that our theological background on angels and demons is established, we can go to the specific's of God and Satan's dealing with Job, beginning in Verse 8.
12. Verse 8: Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil."
- a) I read a wonderful, very loose paraphrase of this verse I wanted to share, "Hey Satan why don't you act more like Job instead of going around trying to cause trouble". (Mike Mason author of the book, 'The Gospel According to Job'). One of the things he noticed was the lack of formality between God and Satan in this dialogue. They're like two old adversaries who know each other well, but don't respect each other and are always working to get the upper hand on each other. Of course I believe God's far more powerful than Satan, but He (God) allows an "equal playing field" in our world to see if we'll still chose Him in spite of Satan's best efforts to get us to turn from Him.
 - b) Anyway, God throws out the "first shot" here by saying, Hey Satan, despite all your effort to get people to turn from Me, the one person you've failed to turn is Job. He's the kind of guy I admire because he trusts Me and works as hard as He can turn from evil. Be aware that God is not saying Job is perfect. God's just saying that Job trusts in Him and does his best to turn from sin whenever possible. This verse also gives us a clue we can be pleasing to God based on our trust of who He is and what He'll accomplish in our world.
13. Verse 9: "Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. ¹⁰ "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. ¹¹ But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face."
- a) Here we get Satan's first response to God's thoughts on Job. Satan says in effect, "Can you blame Job for being such a "goody two shoes"? Look how much You've (God) blessed his life. No wonder Job lives the way he does, he's got riches beyond belief, lots of grown kids who respect their parents and spend time with each other. Still I (Satan) am dead positive that if you (God) take all of that away from Job, then he'll curse You to Your face!" To state the obvious, Satan's "throwing down the gauntlet here" to see God's response. Remember that God loves to test to see whether or not we'll still trust Him in both the good times and the bad or horrid times of our lives. It doesn't mean we can't cry out in pain or ask why is it we have to go through such times. The issue is whether or not we're still trusting in God while we're going through such events.
 - b) By the way, as we read through this book, realize Job has no idea this "bet" is occurring. I think of Job was aware of this bet, he'd respond with, "Gee Satan, thanks a lot!"

- c) Anyway, whether we like it or not, God agrees to Satan's bet. Obviously the purpose here is to test Job's faith, but we get that. The real question for us, is can we accept the fact that the good and bad things of our lives is "God filtered?" He allows us to deal with our own set of good and bad things to see if we'll still trust Him through all of that? I'm not saying that God is the cause of all our misfortunes in life. I'm saying that God allows us to travel through those "tests" (for the lack of a better word) to see if we still trust Him despite all of the things that we have to go through in our lives.
 - d) By the way, the bible does not teach that we must have great wealth in this life in order to be blessed by God. The story of Job is mainly about how he reacts to this massive change of his lifestyle and how he deals with it. The point for you and me is we can't control what we can't control, which is angelic and demonic forces working behind the scenes. All that we can control is our attitude through it all and our trust in God despite whatever it is we must go through in this life. That's the great lesson of the book of Job. Meanwhile, I made the great mistake of writing when God Himself is about to speak to us.
14. Verse 12: The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger." Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.
- a) Bottom line: The terms of the bet are set. The wager is whether or not Job will curse God in spite of all the punishment that he's about to suffer. If nothing else, this bet reminds us that our lives are not fully in our hands. Forces exist that we can't control that can change the circumstances of our lives at any moment. The story of Job is the classic example of it occurring in our world. Anyway, this meeting between God and Satan is over and now it is time for Satan to do his "dirty work" to see who'll win the bet.
 - b) Here's a question to ponder: Why did God limit the amount of damage Satan can do? We know that in a matter of verses God and Satan are "going to change the rules" so Satan can attack Job physically. My question is why the limit here? Remember that Job's got no idea this bet is going on. He's just the "casualty" of the bet. My point here is to realize stuff can occur on our lives that are outside our control. I'm not saying God and Satan are definitely behind every significant situation in our life, but the point is we can't rule it out.
 - c) What about the opposite? Supposed this is just a story to learn from? Why should we get all worked up about the possibility there could be spiritual forces in our lives? To state an old proverb, "We can't control, what we can't control". My point here is simply to consider the possibility that the world is bigger than what we can see or experience.
 - d) Meanwhile, back to the question of why did God limit Satan's damage? It's to see how Job would react to the specific amount of damage inflicted. Obviously Satan thought what he inflicted would be enough, which is why he agreed to the bet. Results are coming up.
15. Verse 13: One day when Job's sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, ¹⁴ a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys were grazing nearby, ¹⁵ and the Sabeans attacked and carried them off. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"
- a) Here's the first of the "bad news" messages sent to Job. The first blow to Job was the lost of most of his animals. We read of an ancient group called the Sabeans. They were a tribe of Nomads (wanderers) who'd steal from others. Think of Gypsies classic reputation, as that is the idea. We all know the famous cliché, "When it can't get any worse, it always does". So far, only half of Job's farm has been lost. Time for Job to receive "blow #2" to his life:
16. Verse 16: While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, "The fire of God fell from the sky and burned up the sheep and the servants, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"
- a) Some argue that the "fire of God" was some sort of volcano. Personally how Job lost the rest of his farm doesn't interest me as much as the fact he did. Notice both the farm and the servants died in "Blow #2". It had to be overwhelming to hear all this news. People have killed themselves for less than this. Yet, Job still has two more "blows" to absorb!

17. Verse 17: While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three raiding parties and swept down on your camels and carried them off. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"
- a) Besides farm animals, Job also raised camels which after riding one, I can best describe as a smelly but effective way to travel a long distance if one didn't have a horse back then!
 - b) Yes I could give a lecture on the Chaldeans, but the main thing to realize is at that time, it is another "stealing, gypsy like group in that area".
 - c) Imagine if you've spent a lifetime building up a business. Then you receive three instant messages saying in effect, "the farm's all gone, the servants all gone and the transportation is all gone". There have been stock crashes where people have killed themselves based on a loss of everything they've acquired in life. Personally, I'd say this is way too much info to take in at one time. It's like body blows that keep coming and never stopped. Speaking of "body blows", Job gets a final one in the next two verses.
18. Verse 18: While he was still speaking, yet another messenger came and said, "Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house,¹⁹ when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on them and they are dead, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"
- a) Stop and think if you've spent your life building up a business. You've been successful at it and have the evidence to show for it. Then you know your grown kids are around as I suspect they're all in "visiting range" if that came up. Now imagine news flash after news flash with bad news, more bad news, even more bad news and seeing everything you've obtained in life disappear in a series of news flashes. I don't know about you, but that has to be overwhelming news. Any one of those things would cause many people to seriously consider suicide, let alone all of them. I've read statistics that marriages rarely survive the loss of a child in that relationship. You've got to think that both Job and his wife had to be on suicide watch at this point. It's the kind of news that's so overwhelming, all one can do is sit there and try to let it soak in.
 - b) As the specifics, the kids all died at one of their "feast days" when they all gathered in one of their homes. I think few things make a grown parent happier than seeing all their kids getting along and doing things together. Some commentators speculate on what type of windstorm could cause this. Me, I'm doing my best just trying to relate to living through all of that bad news. We don't know the time span between the bet, versus when this event occurred, but we do know Satan's goal was to ruin Job's life and he did it here.
 - c) So here's the big question to ponder: Why would God allow all of this? Most of us know of at least one person who lost a loved one to some sort of tragedy. Why doesn't God stop all of that? Why does He allow evil to exist in the first place? For starters, the existence of evil proves the existence of God if such evil is also around. Next, we must remember that we live in a world cursed by sin and I think God's effectively saying sometimes, "it's better if I take that person to be with Me than to let them suffer more". I've personally known of a few great Christians who have had to suffer horribly prior to their death. I can't explain all tragedies. I just know there's a God who is aware of all things and allows bad things to occur somehow ultimately for His glory. OK, speaking of suffering, let's get back to Job.
 - d) Final question here: Who are these messengers who delivered the messages? My guess is they're employees of Job who also realize they're now out of a job, as there is nothing left to manage after the farm's all gone. I think they report the news and left to look for work.
19. Verse 20: At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship²¹ and said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised."
- a) Realize this is Job's first line of dialogue in the book. Don't worry, plenty more is coming.
 - b) Yes Job's going to give a "woe is me" speech, but that's Chapter 3. What's impressive is the first thing he says is he realized he'll die with nothing anyway, so praise be to God.

- c) Here's Job trying to digest all this news. He believes he'll see his children again in the next life, so he accepts their fate. He knows he can always start another business or go work for someone else as he still has his health here. It's as if Job realized he's trusted in God all his life and why should he stop now just because the bottom's dropped out of his life? We got to admit, it takes a lot of courage to look at losing everything and the first thing we say in effect is "Praise be to God for the life He's given me to date". I don't know about you, but to express any type of joy in that moment had to be both heart felt and painful at the same time. Job realized it was God who blessed his life, so He gets the credit for time Job had to experience the joy of raising children and having "stuff".
 - d) Stop and consider what are humans "entitled" to in this life? Are we entitled to be a major success in life? Are we entitled to life a long life? Are we entitled to health insurance as it is being claimed in the United States and much of the world today? Of course not. I'd say we were created with a purpose, to glorify God by our lives. Over and above that, we are not entitled to anything. I bring that up here simply to realize that when we experience a horrid moment like Job, we can always be grateful for something, and at the least we can be grateful we're still alive so we can use our lives to glorify Him.
20. Verse 22: In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.
- a) Stop and think about this for a moment. Job knew nothing of God's bet with Satan. If he did know about it, could Job have stepped in and said, "Wait a minute God, I'm the center of this bet, don't I get any say in what's going on here?" In effect, the last several chapters of the book are God saying to Job, "Who do you think you are to even question Me?" This is one of those moments where we realize, "There is a God and we're not Him!"
 - b) Would you blame Job for wanting to curse out God for his fate? Hardly. Do I think Job is still "heaven material" if he cursed God out for what he's gone through here? Of course. I would argue God would forgive Job as he didn't know about the bet. Remember why we are tested by God in the first place: To see how we react to it. When we go through times that are hard do we accept it and think, "Maybe this is a time of God testing us" or are we just complain about our fate? As my regulars know, I'm convinced there will be rewards in heaven based on our faithfulness to God in any given situation. I suspect Job just got a bunch of "bonus points" for what he said in Verse 21.
 - c) With that said, onto Chapter 2, which is much shorter.
21. Chapter 2, Verse 1: On another day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them to present himself before him. ² And the LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it."
- a) I have no idea how often these meetings occur. Personally I'd like to see one to know how it works. I wonder if humans are not invited for the simple reason that He doesn't want suggestions from the gallery! As I stated earlier, think angels report to God how humans are acting. I believe in a God who knows all things. The good angels are learning about us to learn why God picked who He did and how we act as His witnesses to others. It's just a reminder that like the angel's "we're always on the clock for God".
 - b) Anyway this "angel report" meeting is two fold. It's not only for good angels to report the things they've done, but for Satan to report what he's been up to. If nothing else, all this is a reminder that Satan himself is "God filtered" in terms of how much damage he can do. I stated to start this lesson that we have no idea what happens behind the scenes, but we're to realize that such meetings occur for the education sake of the good and bad angels.
 - c) I sort of picture Satan saying in effect, "What have I been up to? The usual no good!" Does Satan have the power to end human lives? I'd argue yes if God allows it. Just as God put a limit on the damage Satan could do to Job, so I suspect God also limits the damage he is allowed to do to us. Now there's a good reason to pray for God's protection in our lives.
 - d) Again, if we believe God knows all things, a purpose for this meeting is to educate angels.

22. Verse 3: Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And he still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason."
- a) Obviously Satan knew who Job was, at the least because he just orchestrated all those bad things that just occurred to him. When God says, "Have you considered Job?" I see it as a brag about how Job didn't sin despite all the suffering. Have you ever wondered why it is worth trying to live like a "goody two shoes" all of one's life? Well, for starters we'd get God bragging about us and I can't imagine a greater reward than that to shoot for!
 - b) OK then, let's be honest. The rest of us messed up way too much to ever be like Job. I'd bet most of us come from broken homes or have troubled relationships with family members. I'd bet most of us reading this have experienced the hardships of losing a job or worrying about where our next meal is going to come from. All I'm saying is if we're not "Job like", don't panic. God's well aware of all our faults and loves us more than we can imagine. I'd say we should still try to avoid sin as much as possible because the reason we were made in the first place is to glorify God with our lives. When we mess up, confess it, turn from it and go forward doing one's best to live as God desires. The reason I'm giving this speech is I want to realize God's love for you and me is as great as it is for Job. We don't have to panic if we think we'll never be as good as Job. The related good news is most of us won't have to suffer the way he did as well.
 - c) OK then, time for "Round 2" to continue:
23. Verse 4: "Skin for skin!" Satan replied. "A man will give all he has for his own life. ⁵ But stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face." ⁶ The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must spare his life."
- a) Notice Satan didn't respond with, "I did my best, but I'll concede Job's faith in is stronger than I thought it'd be". Instead Satan's response is in effect, "Hey God, I didn't win the bet as I didn't go far enough! Yes, I admit Job didn't curse you after losing everything, but if I take away his health, I (Satan) promise I'll still win this bet."
 - b) Again, I visualize that if Job was allowed to watch all of this, he'd say, "Wait a second, I'm the center of this bet, don't I get any say in what's going to happen to me?" The fact we do not is again proof that there is more to life than what happens to us. We must accept that forces exist behind the scene. So if things go wrong, do we blame Satan? Who knows? It is a matter of accepting that possibility and moving on. All we can do is deal with what we must in life and make the best decisions we can in our situation. All of that is going to lead us back to Job, who's about to find out his situation is going to get worse.
 - c) Let me also remind us again, why did God agree to this bet? Because He gave us free will and He's interested in knowing whether or not we'd still trust Him, even if the "bottom" is falling out of our lives. If God knows all things and if God knows that Job would still win in the end, why did God agree to this bet? The issue as always is us. Because God gave us free will, God needs to test that will to see if we're still trusting Him when the bottom falls out of our lives.
 - i) One of the amazing things to watch about life is when things get horrid, some will turn more to God and others will walk away. I remember reading statistics for those who survived the Holocaust. Some got closer to God after all that and some simply walked away from trusting Him. What I've learned is "tough times" makes us "more of what we already are". If we're God-fearing people before "it" hits, we'll also be God fearing people during and after whatever "it" is. Therefore, the book of Job is simply a demonstration that he's one of those people who draw close to God when things are at their worse. That's an underlying lesson of this book!
 - ii) Meanwhile, Satan said in effort, "Let me physically hurt Job" and then let's all see if he's still willing to trust in God. That's the issue of the bet. Satan still figured all of us have our breaking points and I haven't reached that point with Job just yet."

24. Verse 7: So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head.⁸ Then Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes.
- a) Well, when Satan decides to physically hurt someone, he doesn't mess around. He left Job in such physical pain that all he could do to relieve the pain is "Hang out at the city dump (my speculation) and use a piece of pottery to try to relieve the pain". We don't know the time span all this occurred over. I picture Job sitting outdoors somewhere thinking of the losses he suffered when all of a sudden it hit him, "I'm not just in emotional pain, I'm also in physical pain!" I suspect Job wondered how he got this way. He probably just thought, "I can't explain how it got this bad, but I know it did." Some commentators suspect the reason he went to where ashes were (picture fires burning at a burning dump site) is that is a way to relieve the pain with all the sulfur around. Others think, "Since Job lost everything and he's feeling sorrow over his life, all he wanted to do is hang out in a place we'd associate with sorrow: A dump site.
 - b) Bottom line, Job is now suffering in some sort of horrid pain. We all know that scratching a mosquito bite just makes it worse. I suspect that scratching his boils was Job's only way to deal with the pain, even though it doesn't make it any better.
 - c) Realize we're about to get many chapters of dialogue between Job and three friends on the issue of why Job had to suffer so much. What I want you to realize is that Job was dealing with while he was making his defense to his three friends.
 - d) I don't know about you, but if I lost everything I own, lost my family and am now dealing with horrid pain, I can understand why Job had such a hard "woe is me" attitude over the next section of the book. As we read the next section, realize there's no mention of the bet, which means that Job wasn't privileged to that information at this point in the book.
 - e) With all that said, we get two verses about Job's wife through all of this:
25. Verse 9: His wife said to him, "Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!"¹⁰ He replied, "You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?" In all this, Job did not sin in what he said.
- a) Most commentators I read are pretty tough on Job's wife. They say things like, "I get why Satan didn't take her away with everyone else!" Personally, I'm a little more sympathetic towards her. Let's remember she lost everything too! She literally lost the farm too, which was her source of income as well. She literally lost all her children. The last chapter of the book of Job states that he got new children and a new farm after all of this is over. What is implied is the wife "stuck it out" as she's the one who gave Job more children when all this was over. My point is she was suffering too, although not at Job's level of physical pain.
 - b) For the wife to say, "Curse God and die", does not mean she or anyone else has the ability to say "OK God end my life now, I give up!" Yes we can commit suicide. What I'm getting at is I'm convinced Job's wife was herself on "suicide watch" after all she suffered through and can't imagine having to suffer even more than she is. By seeing her husband suffer at a level greater than hers is enough for her to claim in effect, "Be honest, God's allowed this to happen! Therefore, turn from Him and maybe that'll relieve the suffering!" Obviously she had no idea whether or not cursing God would change anything about their situation. It was just a bad suggestion at a very weak moment in both of their lives.
 - i) Jobs' response in effect was, "Yes it's horrible, but I can't make it better by sinning!"
 - ii) Also realize that Job's calling her a "foolish woman" isn't a certificate of divorce. It is Job's way of saying, "That's not the solution. Yes things are horrid right now, but we can't make it better by cursing God for all of this". It's Job's way of saying, "Yes I'm in horrid physical pain. Yes I lost everything. I can either blame God or draw closer to Him by this experience. Job chose the later.
 - iii) By the way, I don't know what Job's wife did all through the long dialogue that is the rest of the book, I just know she was around as she's part of the story's end.

- c) Meanwhile, we're about to be introduced to the other three main characters of the rest of this book. All three of them will be prominent for over 30 chapters. Therefore, we get to meet them in the last few verses of Chapter 2. Remember the underlying issue of the book is the issue of how we deal with the "card's we're dealt in life". We just got two verses on how the wife dealt with it. Now we get a handful of verses explaining how Job's friends are going to deal with all of this. If nothing else, this part of the chapter reminds us that Job "didn't live in a vacuum". Despite all the horrid that he had to deal with, there's still the issue of how others around him had to deal with seeing all this suffering.
 - d) With that said, time for the last few verses of Chapter 2:
26. Verse 11: When Job's three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite, heard about all the troubles that had come upon him, they set out from their homes and met together by agreement to go and sympathize with him and comfort him.¹² When they saw him from a distance, they could hardly recognize him; they began to weep aloud, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads.¹³ Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was.
- a) The first thing we learn about Job's three friends, is that each of them were from different tribes. None of them were "Jewish" or part of Abraham's family. If nothing else, it shows us that God was interested in relationships with non-Jewish people before, during as well as after the nation of Israel was established. I could google some research on where each of these three guys are from, but the essential point is they were non-Jewish.
 - b) I can't prove it, but I suspect that these three guys were "somewhat" on Job's success level. I read how Bill Gates (founder of Microsoft) became friends with Warren Buffet (another American billionaire) only after both became financially successful in life. I believe people seek out friends who can relate to us. All three of Job's friends came from different tribes. They must have known Job as being a "Godly man" who was blessed by God with his life. The story doesn't mention this, but it must have took time for all three of them to find out about Job and arrange a time for all of them to visit him. There was no "internet" in those days, so communication was slow in those days. My point is this visit didn't happen the next day after Job was struck down. It showed that Job's suffering must have lasted a bit.
 - c) The story tells us that these three men barely recognized Job (picture him sitting among a bunch of burning fires in the ashes, scraping boils off his body). After all three of the men got there, they just spent seven days staring at Job without saying a word. Realize they'd had a history with Job and probably knew him from business dealings or simply the fact they all believed in a single God. This scene also reminds us that not all non-Israelites did worship pagans. Some believed in a single God back then. Yes these three made mistakes in their thoughts about God, but that's news for later lessons.
 - i) I keep thinking about this scene. Did it mean his friends didn't sleep or eat for the seven days? Did they pack enough food that they didn't have to leave Job's spot? Did they figure, "Hey we're at a dump anyway, it's a good spot to take one!" Sorry about that but I think about this stuff too much!
 - ii) What we do know is that for seven days these three men were there and didn't say a word. I can't imagine being quiet for that long. I picture it sort of like some sort of staring contest, where the first person to say something loses. Anyway, Job will break the ice in Chapter 3, but that's getting ahead of the story.
 - d) If you've read this book you know we've got over 30 chapters of debate to go between Job and his three friends. Here's a key point to remember: After all that debate took place, it was God Himself who said, "What these three men said was wrong". Yes we're going to spend many a lesson discussing the debate and what was said. What's important for right now is to realize as we read what those three said, realize "God said they were wrong". So I'd say read what they say with a grain of salt and keep that in mind.

27. The really good news is we got through the first two chapters in a little over 11 pages. If you can handle these two chapters, you'll be surprised what we can learn about ourselves, as well as our own relationship with God simply by studying this book. The book of Job is challenging to study as there are over 100 words not used anywhere else in the bible. There is poetry, a fairly lengthy discussion about creation itself and God gives a several chapter speech to end the book. My point is the book of Job is worth studying and we've just done the "background section" in the first two chapters. Imagine what we're going to learn about ourselves our relationship with God as well as life itself as we go through this book. Therefore I welcome you to join me as we begin this journey together. In the meantime, I'll close in prayer and ask for His protection while the good and evil angels "pull the strings" in our world and our lives.
28. Let's pray: Father, first we give you thanks that you've chosen us before the world began. If we're chosen by You, I can't see how we lose that. We can waste the greatest resource You've provided us, which is our time. So let us use that time to glorify You with our lives. We also accept the idea that forces are out there "pulling the strings" and we can't change that fact. However what we can do is pray for Your guidance, Your protection and Your Spirit to guide us so that we do Your will as we go through this life. Thank You for the lessons You've taught us already in this book as and the one's you will teach. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.