

## RIGHTLY DIVIDING JOB

- A. Introduction: For a number of weeks we have been talking about learning to respond rather than react to the hardships of life. When you respond, you acknowledge God in your situation. You talk about who He is and what He has done, is doing, and will do. Ps 107:8,15,21,31; James 1:2,3
1. In order to respond to the challenges of life you must have accurate knowledge of God. Many of us have a lot of misconceptions about God and how He works.
    - a. Some of our misconceptions come from misunderstanding the Book of Job. In the past few lessons we have been looking at Job to try to expose and deal with those misunderstandings.
    - b. We keep going over Job because we have so many erroneous and religious (but non-biblical) idea. It's hard for us to hear anything about Job without interpreting it through our misconceptions.
  2. In this lesson we want to talk about rightly dividing the Book of Job. Divide means to make a straight cut. It is used figuratively to mean to dissect or expound correctly. II Tim 2:15--Try hard to show yourself worthy of God's approval, as a laborer who need not be ashamed (NEB), correctly analyzing Berkeley), accurate in (20<sup>th</sup> Cent), declaring the word of truth without distortion Conybeare).
    - a. How you read the Bible is as important as what you read. We come at it from the wrong angle. We read it from the standpoint of 21<sup>st</sup> century American Christianity and all the traditions we have.  
The people who first heard the Book of Job read it from a completely different standpoint.
    - b. We approach it from the standpoint of: What does it mean to me? How does it apply to me and my life? It doesn't matter what it means to you.
      1. What matters is, what does it say, what would it say, what would it mean, if you did not exist.
      2. Everything in the Bible was written by someone to someone about something. It cannot mean something to us that it would not have meant to the people whom the words were first written.
- B. The Bible is progressive revelation. God has gradually revealed Himself through the pages of scripture until the full light given in Jesus in the New Testament. John 14:9,10; 5:19; Heb 1:1-3
1. The Old Testament contains less light and must be filtered through the light of the New Testament.
    - a. That means the Old Testament revelation cannot contradict or supersede the revelation given us in Jesus in the New Testament. That means we must consider what the New Testament says about the Old Testament issues, people, and events. The standard interpretation of Job contradicts these guidelines for rightly dividing the word of truth.
    - b. There is no hint in the New Testament of Jesus and the devil working together, quite the opposite. Jesus undid the works of the devil. If God commissions them, Jesus undid the Father's work.
      1. I John 3:8--The reason the Son of God was made manifest(visible) was to undo (destroy, loosen, and dissolve) the works the devil [has done]. (Amp).
      2. Acts 10:38--He went about doing good and in particular curing all that were harassed and oppressed by [the power of] the devil, for God was with Him. (Amp)
      3. Luke 13:16--Jesus said it was right that a woman bound by Satan be loosed from bondage.
    - c. The only New Testament comment about Job is James 5:11 which commends Job for his patience or endurance and points us to the end of Job's story (Job 42:10).
      1. The Lord turned the captivity of Job and gave him twice as much as he had before. That is consistent with what Jesus shows us about God. Luke 4:18
      2. Job is not about God afflicting one of His servants for some purpose. According to the New Testament it is about God setting a captive free because He is merciful and compassionate.
  2. The standard interpretation of Job does not fit with the rest of the Bible when it is considered in the context of the people to whom it was first written. Job is the earliest book of the Bible. Moses heard Job's story while he was in Midian which was adjacent to Uz, Job's home. Ex 3:2; Job 1:1
    - a. Moses recorded Job's story to give his people, Israel, hope. Israel was still suffering in bondage in

Egypt and Job is the story of God setting a captive free.

1. That is consistent with what the New Testament says about the Old Testament. Rom 15:4 says it was written to give us hope.
2. If Job is about God allowing the devil to afflict His people for some sovereign purpose and you don't know why -- where is the hope in that?
- b. The first people who heard Job's story had been in bondage for a long time, with no end in sight.
  1. Job was written to show Israel the blessing of endurance (of staying faithful to God) in the midst of trouble. If you persevere, you will make it through the trial. James 1:1-4,12; 5:7-11
  2. Job endured (exercised patience), stayed faithful to God, and God delivered him from bondage, restoring to him all he had lost two times over.
3. Job was also written to show Israel that there is an Adversary at work in the earth who challenges God, seeks to undermine God, as he works to entice men into rebellion against God.
  - a. The name Satan is mentioned 19 times in the Old Testament, 14 times in the Book of Job -- more than all the other times combined. God is called the Almighty or SHADDAI 31 times in Job, more than all the other times in the Old Testament combined (17 times). SHADDAI means mighty.
  - b. The purpose of this revelation about God's power and the devil's work was not to tell Israel: God, sometimes use the devil to afflict my people for my sovereign reasons.
    1. The purpose was to show Israel: My Adversary (Satan) cannot do anything that takes Me by surprise and he can't do anything that's too big for Me to handle.
    2. No matter what comes your way because of the work of Satan, I will deliver you f from the bondage to which you have been subjected.
4. The idea that the devil is God's chastening agent whom He sometimes use to afflict His people would have made no sense to the people to whom Job was first written.
  - a. God's revelation to Israel up to this time came through oral traditions passed down from one generation to the next. God had promised Canaan to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Gen 12:1-7
    1. God told Abraham that his descendants would be enslaved in a foreign land. Gen 15:13,14-- And they shall be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years...in the end they shall go free with great wealth. (Torah)
    2. When Jacob went down to Egypt God told him: I'll bring you back to the land (Gen 46:2-4). Joseph wanted his bones taken back to Canaan (Gen 48:21; 50:24-26). That is the context in which Israel would have heard Job's story. They would not have heard it in the context of Paul's thorn or trials of gold or God purging us with suffering.
  - b. As the years of their enslavement passed, like all people, they must have wondered why they ended up enslaved and if they would ever be free. Job's story would have given them hope by revealing:
    1. There is an Adversary who takes men captive. Idol worshipping, Satan-inspired heathen moved by jealousy and fear had enslaved Israel.
    2. But Job's story assured them that God knew about it and had a plan in mind to deliver them just as He had told their elders and just as He had delivered Job.
- C. Many Christians stumble over Job because they've heard: Yes, but God "allowed" the devil to afflict Job.
  1. It's hard for us to discuss this without hearing it in terms of preconceived ideas. The phrase "God allows" is loaded with inaccurate meanings for most of us. It is another religious cliché.
    - a. Implicit in that phrase is the idea that, because God didn't stop something, He is somehow for it, behind it, or approving of it. God allows people to sin. That doesn't mean He is for it in any way.
    - b. We must understand that certain processes were set in motion at the fall of man which are still being played out today and will continue until Jesus returns to this earth.
      1. When Adam disobeyed God, sin and death entered the world and the human race. Rom 5:12

2. Satan became the god of this world and goes about seeking men to devour, not because God “allows it”. That is simply the nature of life now in a sin cursed earth. II Cor 4:4; I Pet 5:8
  2. God and the devil are not working together. Nowhere does the Bible call the devil an ally of God, an instrument of God, or God’s teaching and perfecting tool. The Holy Spirit is the Teacher of the Church (John 14:26) and the word of God is His teaching tool (Eph 6:17).
    - a. The devil is called an enemy. The name Satan means adversary. STRONG’S CONCORDANCE calls him “the arch-enemy of good”. Why would the arch-enemy of God and all that is good be interested in perfecting God’s people and making them more holy?
    - b. James 4:7 says submit to God and resist the devil. If God sends or allows the devil to afflict you to teach you, purge you, or discipline you , how can you obey this verse and resist the devil yet still receive the teaching, discipline, and purging of God through the devil?
  3. Sometimes people point to an event in the New Testament to try to make the case that God uses the devil to disciple and perfect people like He did to Job. I Cor 5:1-13
    - a. There was a man in the church at Corinth who was sleeping with his father’s wife and Paul wrote to the church to tell them how to deal with the situation. v1-5
      1. v2--Shouldn’t you be overwhelmed with sorrow and shame? The man who has done such a thing should certainly be expelled from your fellowship. (Phillips)
      2. v5--That man should be left to the mercy of Satan so that while his body will experience the destructive powers of sin his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. (Phillips)
    - b. Turn the man over to the devil is another way of saying: Put him out from under the protection, fellowship, and blessing of being part of the church.
      1. To equate this with Job is a case of not rightly dividing the word of God. This in no way compares to Job. It is a church government issue. Job had no idea why his troubles came. The guy at Corinth knew exactly what he had done wrong, why he was put out of the church
      2. Paul told the Corinthians to put this man out of the church for these reasons: v7--So you will not all be influence by his sin; v11--He had previously told them not to associate with “anyone who calls himself a Christian but lives in sexual sin (Beck).
      3. Sin works death (Rom 6:23). Sowing to the flesh produces corruption (Gal 6:7,8). Paul was telling them: Let the man reap the consequences of his sin. The man will know exactly why he is reaping the fruit of his sin. Hopefully, that will bring him to repentance.
- D. Another cliché, the idea that God limits what the devil can do to you is based on not rightly dividing Job.
1. People say that in the first conversation between God and the devil (Job 1:6-12), God permitted Satan to take Job’s wealth and family, but not hurt Job himself (v12). Then, in the second conversation between God and the devil (Job 2:1-6) God permitted Satan to afflict Job’s body, but not kill him (v6).
    - a. These verses cannot be saying that God gives the devil permission to take away the property and loved ones of his servants, and if that doesn’t produce the desired results, God gives the devil permission to afflict the person himself -- but God won’t let the devil kill him. That is contrary to the revelation of God given to us in Jesus.
    - b. Because of the influence of the devil through religion we have put negative spins on many things that were meant to be positive. Job 2:6 is one of those things.
  2. God told Adam that if he ate from the forbidden tree the result of his sin would be death (Gen 2:17). Because of Adam’s sin death is working in the earth (Rom 5:12).
    - a. Physical death, the death of the body, is only a portion of the death that resulted from Adam’s sin.
      1. Adam was separated from God (Gen 3:8) and his body died 930 years later (Gen 5:5).
      2. But neither of those experiences encompass the full meaning of death. Death, in its ultimate sense, is separation of the entire man for ever, also known as the second death. Rev 20:14
    - b. At the moment Adam sinned he did experience death but it was not yet a permanent, irreversible

condition. That is what the devil would have liked to have done -- permanently separate Adam and Eve from God thwart the plan of God to have a family through them. Why did it not happen?

God already had a plan in mind to deal with this seeming catastrophe, the Cross. Rev 13:8

1. Rom 5:17--And if death began its reign through one man, owing to one man's fault (Knox) far more shall the reign of life be established in those who receive (Conybeare) abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness (KJV).
2. Heb 2:14,15-- Jesus took on a human nature so He could die and through His death "render powerless" (20<sup>th</sup> Cent) him who "wields the power of death" (Moffatt), to "completely set free" (Amp) them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.
- c. On the basis of the Cross and the grace that comes to us through the Cross, Satan was prevented from wiping out the human race at the beginning.
3. The grace of God continues to keep the devil from killing men before they have an opportunity to come back to Father's house (Titus 2:11). Time is space to repent.
  - a. When God said in Job, "Touch not his life" God was not saying, "You can't kill him unless I give you permission. Through these words, God's first written revelation to His people was: I'm bigger than death and the lord of death doesn't have more power than Me.
    1. We try to use that verse to figure out why our loved one died young and we conclude that God permits the devil to take your life when it's your time, if He sees fit -- cliché after cliché.
    2. The purpose of the Book of Job is not to explain why people die at particular times.
  - b. Job 2:6--Don't take his life. Life is the word NEPHESH which means breath, the inner being with its thoughts and emotions. When applied to a person it means the whole person. When God made Adam He made a living soul (Gen 2:7--NEPHESH).
    1. God is not saying you'll die when I give the devil permission to kill you. He is showing His people that He is bigger than the devil and the damage done at the fall of man.
    2. In a sin cursed earth populated with men in mortal bodies physical death occurs. Death is working in all of our bodies so that they grow old and die. They are vulnerable to sickness and can be damaged by accidents. God is not addressing physical death here in Job.
    3. God is revealing: Even though you are in the devil's territory and under the reign of death because of Adam's sin the devil can't snatch you from Me. I am bigger than the devil and I will ultimately remove all death from My universe. Physical death will end with the resurrection of the dead. Job 19:25,26
- E. Conclusion: We have not said everything we want to say about Job, but consider this point as we close.
  1. The purpose of the throne room scene and conversations between God and the devil in Job is not meant to scare or confuse people. How do we know?
    - a. That's not what it would have meant to the first people to whom it was written (Israel) or to first century Christians. Therefore, it cannot mean that to us.
    - b. It scares and confuses because we impose outside interpretations on the Book of Job. We try to use it to explain things the book does not address. We don't rightly divide Job.
  2. Job was written to give Israel hope, to show them: There is nothing bigger than Me. Nothing takes Me by surprise. I deliver My people from bondage because I am good. More next week!