



## Job - Chapter Two

### I Job 1:1-2:13 - Prologue: Job's Character and the Circumstances of His Test (continues/concludes)

#### Summary of Chapter Two

Satan again appears before the Lord and this time he claims that Job has not cursed God because he has only lost possessions and family, but not been personally touched. Therefore, God gives Satan permission to harm Job but not to kill him. Satan returns to the earth and inflicts painful sores over Job's entire body. Job scrapes the sores with a piece of pottery and continues to lament before the Lord but without blaming or cursing him, despite his wife's bidding to do so.

Three friends of Job hear of his plight and come to comfort him. When they see what a desperate state he is in, they too join in with the mourning but speak no word to Job.

#### I.c Job 2:1-10 - The Second Test - Attack on Job's Health

This section presents the setting, dialogue, and events relating to Job's second test, which parallel the description and extend the sphere of the first test as recorded in Job 1:6-22.

#### I.c.i Job 2:1-6 - The Challenge in Heaven

The second glimpse of the heavenly court deliberately echoes the first in Job 1:6-12. Taking ultimate responsibility for Job's calamities, the Lord again fixes Satan's attention on Job's blameless and God-honouring character (v.3). Satan responds by seeking permission to attack Job himself, urging that this will reveal the insincerity of Job's devotion to God (vv.4-5), just as he had done previously in Job 1:9.

<sup>1</sup> One day the heavenly beings came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the Lord. <sup>2</sup> The Lord said to Satan, 'Where have you come from?' Satan answered the Lord, 'From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it.' <sup>3</sup> The Lord said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man who fears God and turns away from evil. He still persists in his integrity, although you incited me against him, to destroy him for no reason.'

### Job 2:1-3

One day the heavenly beings came to present themselves before the Lord. This again indicates that Satan and certain angelic beings, fallen as well as faithful, have somewhat open access to God's presence in heaven.

The Lord said to Satan. The dialogue recorded here was completely unknown to Job; although perhaps, if he was indeed the author of the book, God revealed this heavenly behind-the-scenes conversation to him at a later time.

Where have you come from? As in Chapter 1, the Lord knows very well what Satan has been up to and where he has been. He is just testing his responses but not expecting an honest answer: <<*You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies*>> (John 8:44).

From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it. Just as Job still retained his integrity, so did Satan his vanity; boasting that he came now from visiting his estate. Jesus does acknowledge that Satan, the 'ruler of the earth,' does have some limited authority but has already been defeated: <<*Now is the judgement of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out*>> (John 12:31), <<*I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me*>> (John 14:30), <<*And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgement: about sin, because they do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; about judgement, because the ruler of this world has been condemned*>> (John 16:8-11).

The Lord points out to Satan that even after all that has happened to him, Job still persists in his integrity, a description referring to the whole of his grief, worship, and profession in Job 1:20-21 as a faithful response. Up to this point, this second

recorded dialogue followed the same pattern shown in Job 1:6-8. God used the repetition to impress upon Satan the futility of his first attack against Job.

Although you incited me against him. This shows that both God and Satan understood that the attack could only come against Job because God allowed it. Although God did not actively send the Sabæans, the Chaldeans, the fire, or the wind, they could only come with his permission.

To destroy him for no reason. The idea is not that reason or cause was absent in either God or Satan; they both had something they wanted to prove and establish in the whole account. However, there was no sinful cause in Job that prompted the calamities that befell him.

<sup>4</sup> Then Satan answered the Lord, ‘Skin for skin! All that people have they will give to save their lives. <sup>5</sup> But stretch out your hand now and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face.’ <sup>6</sup> The Lord said to Satan, ‘Very well, he is in your power; only spare his life.’

#### Job 2:4-6

Skin for skin! It is possible that the metaphor refers to the further test Satan is about to request, namely, the permission to afflict Job’s own body. However, the structure of vv.4-5 suggests that it and the following phrase All that people have they will give to save their lives are referring primarily to what has already happened. Satan is crassly suggesting that Job maintained his integrity because it cost him only the ‘skin’ of his livestock and family, which he was happy to trade for his own. The next phrase begins with an explicit adversative in Hebrew (**But**), which contains Satan’s final plea: afflict Job in his bone and his flesh and then he will surely curse God outright.

When it came down to it, Abraham twice betrayed his wife to save his life (Genesis 12:13 and 20:2). David forsook his sanity to save his life (1 Samuel 21:13). Peter denied Jesus to save his own life (Mark 14:71). There is certainly some truth to the statement, all that people have they will give to save their lives.

But stretch out your hand now and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face. Satan insisted that if the attack were made against Job directly - if some calamity came upon Job’s body causing him physical pain - then Job would certainly curse God.

Only spare his life. Once again God lowers the fence that is suggested surrounds Job but he does not remove it, giving only limited permission for Satan to injure Job but not to kill him. The sparing of Job’s life is not a mercy and not merely a concession necessary for the test but is integral to the test. The most difficult of life’s sorrows are sometimes found when even the mercy of death is denied: <<*Why is light given to one in misery, and life to the bitter in soul, who long*

*for death, but it does not come, and dig for it more than for hidden treasures; who rejoice exceedingly, and are glad when they find the grave? Why is light given to one who cannot see the way, whom God has fenced in?>> (Job 3:20-23), and: <<O that I might have my request, and that God would grant my desire; that it would please God to crush me, that he would let loose his hand and cut me off!>> (Job 6:8-9). This was the ultimate test of faith.*

#### I.c.ii Job 2:7-10 - Job's Affliction and Confession

Already in a physical and emotional posture of grief, Job is struck with sores and his wife's question, to which he responds further in grief and trust in God.

<sup>7</sup> So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord, and inflicted loathsome sores on Job from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. <sup>8</sup> Job took a potsherd with which to scrape himself, and sat among the ashes.

#### Job 2:7-8

So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord. Satan leaves the heavenly realm and returns to the earthly one. No one knows how this is achieved but it seems that the two realms coexist in different dimensions that are not known to or detectable through scientific methods.

And inflicted loathsome sores on Job from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. This disease that came upon Job was specifically meant to drive Job to such great despair that he would curse God. It is no surprise that the attack against Job was severe, producing painful boils, and massive, covering his entire body from head to foot.

The reader is again challenged to see that Satan has the power to attack mankind in ways perhaps previously not perceived. Previously it was shown that Satan could inspire others to attack Job (Job 1:14 and 1:17), and could direct natural calamity as an attack against Job's family and possessions (Job 1:16 and 1:18-19). Now it is revealed that disease and physical suffering could come against Job as an attack from Satan. Another example of this is in Luke 13:16, where Jesus revealed that a woman who had been afflicted for 18 years was actually afflicted with a spirit of infirmity and was bound by Satan in her condition.

One of the curses God promised to a disobedient Israel was: <<*The Lord will afflict you with the boils of Egypt, with ulcers, scurvy, and itch, of which you cannot be healed*>> (Deuteronomy 28:27). This may very well be the same affliction that Job suffered from; it is a reminder also that Job had every reason to feel cursed by God and he appeared that way to others also.

Whatever the exact diagnosis of Job's condition, taken together his medical problems were significant. Other passages in the Book of Job reveal more of what Job suffered:

- **Intense pain:** <<*The night racks my bones, and the pain that gnaws me takes no rest*>> (Job 30:17).
- **Peeling and darkened skin:** <<*My skin turns black and falls from me*>> (Job 30:30a).
- **Pus-filled, erupting sores:** <<*My flesh is clothed with worms and dirt; my skin hardens, then breaks out again*>> (Job 7:5).
- **Anorexia, emaciation:** <<*My bones cling to my skin and to my flesh*>> (Job 19:20a).
- **Fever:** <<*my bones burn with heat*>> (Job 30:30b).
- **Depression:** <<*I loathe my life; I would not live for ever*>> (Job 7:16a), and: <<*My inward parts are in turmoil, and are never still; days of affliction come to meet me. I go about in sunless gloom*>> (Job 30:27-28a).
- **Deep sorrow:** <<*My face is red with weeping*>> (Job 16:16a).
- **Sleeplessness:** <<*When I lie down I say, "When shall I rise?"*>> (Job 7:4a).
- **Nightmares:** <<*then you scare me with dreams and terrify me with visions*>> (Job 7:14).
- **Putrid breath:** <<*My breath is repulsive to my wife*>> (Job 19:17a).
- **Difficulty breathing:** <<*he will not let me get my breath*>> (Job 9:18a).
- **Failing vision:** <<*deep darkness is on my eyelids*>> (Job 16:16b).
- **Haggard looks:** <<*When they saw him from a distance, they did not recognise him*>> (Job 2:12a).
- **Painful swollen sores all over his body:** <<*loathsome sores on Job from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head*>> (Job 2:7b).
- **Intense itching from open, pus-filled sores:** <<*Job took a potsherd with which to scrape himself*>> (Job 2:8a).
- **This condition lasted for months:** <<*O that I were as in the months of old*>> (Job 29:2a), and: <<*so I am allotted months of emptiness, and nights of misery are apportioned to me*>> (Job 7:3).

Job took a potsherd with which to scrape himself, and sat among the ashes. Job dealt with his painful affliction to the best of his ability by scraping away the infection with a fragment of broken pottery, and then sat in a mournful place. He would no doubt have poured the ashes over his head and body as a sign of his grief and sorrow at his situation.

<sup>9</sup> Then his wife said to him, 'Do you still persist in your integrity? Curse God, and die.'<sup>10</sup> But he said to her, 'You speak as any foolish woman

would speak. Shall we receive the good at the hand of God, and not receive the bad?’ In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

### Job 2:9-10

Although the reference to Job’s wife is very brief, the content of her speech is significant for how it relates to the heavenly dialogue and for what this connection reveals about the nature of her comments. Her rhetorical question doubts the sensibility of the very thing God finds commendable about Job, i.e. Do you still persist in your integrity?, and her suggested response advises Job to take the action Satan was looking to provoke, that is, to curse God, and die; refer to Job 1:11 and v.4 above.

**The Septuagint puts more words into the mouth of Job’s wife:** <<*How long wilt thou hold out, saying, Behold, I wait yet a little while, expecting the hope of my deliverance? for, behold, thy memorial is abolished from the earth, even thy sons and daughters, the pangs and pains of my womb which I bore in vain with sorrows; and thou thyself sittest down to spend the nights in the open air among the corruption of worms, and I am a wanderer and a servant from place to place and house to house, waiting for the setting of the sun, that I may rest from my labours and my pangs which now beset me: but say some word against the Lord, and die*>>.

Job responds to his wife with a measured rebuke: he does not presume to know her heart fully, but warns her against speaking like one of the foolish women. This was a wisely-worded rebuke to Job’s wife. He did not accuse her of being a foolish woman, but of speaking like one of the foolish women. He indicated that this was out of character for her. Nevertheless, the implication of her words, “do you still persist in your integrity?” is that she had abandoned her own integrity and faith in God. Satan’s goal in his attacks against Job was to shake Job from his standing; he failed in regard to Job, but he succeeded in regard to Job’s wife. Job must have been severely grieved both at his wife’s foolish words and her own shaken faith.

Shall we receive the good at the hand of God, and not receive the bad? Job again shows his wisdom in this reply. He recognised that God does not owe anyone anything; he gives it as a gift that each person should accept. Accordingly, if adversity comes upon a person, and they are wise to see that even in adversity there may be a ‘gift’ that they should accept. As the apostle Paul puts it: <<*Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong*>> (2 Corinthians 12:10).

In all this Job did not sin with his lips. This is another remarkable statement to the credit of Job. He did not sin in his response to either his God or his wife. In all this is a broad statement, meaning that up to this point Job had not sinned at all

in what he said. This is important to note, because some say that these calamities came upon Job because of a negative confession he made, supposedly recorded in Job 1:5 and in Job 3:25. This statement makes it clear that Job did not sin with his lips, certainly not in the sense of a negative confession.

#### I.d Job 2:11-13 - Job's Three Friends

After hearing about his troubles, Job's three friends come together to show him sympathy, provide moral support and to mourn with him.

<sup>11</sup> Now when Job's three friends heard of all these troubles that had come upon him, each of them set out from his home – Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. They met together to go and console and comfort him.

#### Job 2:11

Now when Job's three friends heard of all these troubles that had come upon him, each of them set out from his home. This passage introduces three remarkable friends of Job. These men came to Job in his hour of need.

The three friends of Job all have southern origins known in the OT:

- Eliphaz is from Teman, an important city in Edom as recorded in Genesis 36:11 and 36:15, Ezekiel 25:13 and Amos 1:11-12, which was apparently known for its wisdom: <<*Concerning Edom. Thus says the Lord of hosts: Is there no longer wisdom in Teman? Has counsel perished from the prudent? Has their wisdom vanished?*>> (Jeremiah 49:7).
- Bildad is from Shuah, a name of one of the sons of Abraham from his marriage to Keturah, whose brother was Midian and whose nephews were Sheba and Dedan (Genesis 25:2 and 1 Chronicles 1:32), the latter being the name of a place in Edom or Arabia.
- Zophar is from Naamah, which is the name of a woman listed in the genealogy of Cain in Genesis 4:22, from whom the Kenites were descendants. The Kenites are also mentioned in connection with the Midianites in the Sinai and Arabian deserts; refer to Numbers 10:29 and Judges 4:11.

They met together to go and console and comfort him. Their intended goal was good and noble. They came to be with him, to share his sorrow and to bring some relief to Job.

<sup>12</sup> When they saw him from a distance, they did not recognise him, and they raised their voices and wept aloud; they tore their robes and threw dust in the air upon their heads.

## Job 2:12

It is likely that Job's friends did not recognise him because, in addition to his sores, Job bore the external effects of both the emotional weight and physical manifestations of his grief (Job 1:20 and vv.7-8). Upon seeing Job, his three friends were instantly gripped with grief and mourning as if one had died.

<sup>13</sup> They sat with him on the ground for seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great.

## Job 2:13

The silence over a period of seven days and seven nights signifies a complete time of mourning in response to the suffering of Job. This was a wonderful display of comfort and common cause with Job. They shared in his afflicted state, acting as if they were similarly afflicted. They offered no statement except for their compassionate presence. Ezekiel exhibited a similar response upon meeting the exiles in Babylon: *<<I came to the exiles at Tel-abib, who lived by the river Chebar. And I sat there among them, stunned, for seven days>>* (Ezekiel 3:15).

Joyce Meyer once commented that there are occasions when no words of comfort can be offered. All she could do was to sit down with the person and cry with them.

After this point in the Book of Job there begins 35 chapters of discussion between Job and his friends. Yet all that discussion must be seen in the context of the genuine love and concern that these friends had for Job, and there was a sense in which they earned their right to speak by their sacrificial display of compassion. Even though they lose their way in their dialogue with Job, appearing to be condemnatory and judgemental, these men are to be admired:

- Because they came to be with Job in a time of need.
- Because they wept for and with Job.
- Because they sat in silence with Job for seven days and nights.
- Because they intended the best for Job, and were persistent in wanting and doing what they thought was best for him.
- Because they gave their honest opinion about Job and his condition to Job himself, instead of speaking about him to others.