

“...The Lord gave and
the Lord has taken
away...”

(DOES THE LORD GIVE AND THEN TAKE AWAY?)

*“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.” -Job 1:21*

The title of our essay comes from a well known verse in the Jewish scriptures. It is found within a statement made by the title character of the Book of Job – Job, himself. Just prior to him making this statement, Job had just found out that a marauding band of “Sabeans” came and stole all his oxen and asses and killed the servants that were tending to them; then he learned that a great fire (most likely caused by a great lightning bolt) came from heaven and burned up all his flocks and killed more of his servants; he then received word that the Chaldeans came and rustled away all his camels and killed the servants tending to them; and last but not least Job received the news that all 10 of his children were just killed when a great wind (most likely a violent wind and sand storm) caused the house they were in to fall upon them.

Obviously, it was not a good day for Job. No, it was actually a horrible day for a man who had everything. He was considered *“the greatest man in all the east.”* (Job 1:6) Most of us are very familiar with the account written in the Book of Job. Most of us have experienced tragic situations such as some of the things that happened to Job. The “world” that he knew had just fallen apart and mostly everything he had was now gone – property, cattle and flocks which were vital to his wealth and living and most horribly, all of his children had just died in a most tragic way. A parent never expects to outlive their children. After hearing of all these horrible things that happened Job in his time of deep grief, makes one of the most familiar statements in the scriptures, *“The Lord has given and the Lord takes away.”* Is this statement truth or a mistaken concept concerning God? Let’s see.

First we need to take a look at this fellow Job. From evidence found within the Book of Job we can see that Job lived in a time after the flood but before the time of Moses. It is possible that he may have lived as a contemporary of Abraham. Either way it was before Moses and the Law. Job was called a “perfect and upright” man by God. In other words, God looked at Job in the same way that He looked at Abraham – righteous. This would be considered a great statement made by God concerning a person who lived at that time. They were as “righteous” as anyone could be at that point in time.

They were considered “righteous” by God because they loved, worshipped, feared (had reverential awe) and were obedient to Him in the best way they could as they were both in an unregenerate state. Remember, they were not born again nor were they “spirit filled” because Jesus had not yet died for their sins. Therefore, Job, Abraham, as well as all of the other great men and women found in the Jewish Scriptures, lacked a true, full spiritual understanding of the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness and the spiritual warfare that was on for their souls. They also were lacking in their understanding of God’s full character and nature, His thoughts and His ways.

As we continue on concerning the title phrase of our discussion, *“...the Lord gave and the Lord has taken away...”* I believe a key verse that gives a clue to the context of the Book of Job is found in the opening dialogue that we see that Job has within himself. In Job 1:5, Job makes an interesting statement - *“And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.”* The key phrase, I think, is *“It may be that my sons **have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts**”* Keep that in mind as we continue.

As we continue on, we see the next “scene” is that of God and the “gathering of the sons of God” (angels) in which we see satan in attendance. Why he was there is for another discussion. The fact that we need to key in on is that he was there and he and God had a discussion concerning Job. The main function for satan, which by the way, the term “satan” means “adversary,” is to try to cause continual and ultimate separation between men and their God. Notice, that when they had their “conversation” satan’s ultimate goal was to accuse Job of not being the man God thought he was and to try to cause Job to “curse God.” Job 1:11 *“But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he **will curse thee** to thy face.”* Job 2:5 – *“But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he **will curse thee** to thy face.”*

So what does it mean to “curse God” and why was it so important to satan to get Job to do this? To “curse God” would fall under the category of extreme blasphemy. Such a curse would not be unintentional but it would be willful and premeditated. Scripturally, a curse is more than just wishing something bad to happen to someone; it is the official pronouncement that bad things **will** happen. To curse God, therefore, would be to turn against Him - not just turn away from Him but to turn **against** Him - to become His “adversary,” Remember the term, “satan” means adversary. It would be a place of **willfully and totally** separating one’s self from God. Are we beginning to see the strategy? To turn against God to the degree that one curses Him would bring that individual to a place of “passing that point of no return.” In Job’s day, it was believed that such a curse against God would result in the immediate death of the individual at the hand of God (Job 2:9).

So who would be a good candidate to “curse God?” It would be one who felt that God had been unfair and unjust towards them and that God would no longer be unworthy of their love, worship, awe and obedience, therefore, wanting nothing more to do with God. They would look upon God as their enemy. Actually, it goes further than just not wanting anything to do with God but as we mentioned previously, that person would place themselves as an actual adversary **against** God. We all know how that would turn out. However, that is satan’s ultimate goal for all of God’s most precious of His creation. Having said this, we can start to see that the whole story of Job is really based around the question, “Would Job curse God?”

Job was a man who truly loved God. However, he did not fully know Him or comprehend His ways, His character and His nature. In actuality, Job was “religious” in His thinking or we can say his “theology.” As we know, the term “theology” is basically man’s understanding of God or we can say it is “finite man” trying to understand an “infinite God.” This is an impossible task. We just cannot grasp the height, depth, length and width of the awesomeness and fullness of God in all His ways and thoughts. Man’s theology leads him to mistaken ideas, thoughts and attitudes towards an infinite God. This is what took place in the man known as Job.

As we return to the phrase that Job spoke in Job 1:22, *“The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away,”* confusion can come when we read that Job, after saying this phrase, did it with a heart of worship as we then hear him say, *“may the name of the Lord be praised.”* However, we must understand that a person can still love God and even worship Him but yet have an incorrect understanding of some of the things concerning the God that they worship. Many Jewish people today love God but yet lack a true understanding of the revelation of Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, who was sent by God the Father to save us from our sin and restore relationship back with our God. Even though Job “blessed the name of the Lord” it didn’t mean that he knew the total truth and understood God’s ways, character and nature.

The next verse brings a little bit more confusion to the misunderstanding. It tells us in Job 1:22, *“In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.”* What was the sin that Job **did not** commit? Actually, if we look back at what we discussed concerning the account between God and satan we know that the ultimate goal for satan was to try to get Job to curse God. Job was concerned about this with his children as we read, previously.

We see that even though Job was mistaken in his understanding of God and his ways, he still did not get to the point where he cursed God and became adversarial towards God. This was the “sin” that he **did not** do. Having a mistaken attitude towards God is not necessarily sin although it can lead to a perverted view of the God that you love which we ultimately need to turn and repent from as we will see later in our discussion. Let’s face it - no one has it totally correct. We are all in the process of trying to grasp the fullness of God – even though we are born again and spirit filled. We are still in the process and we will not know it all or understand it all until we are with Him forever.

We see that Job’s wife said for him to “*curse God and die.*” Yet we read that even after this, Job did not sin – he did not yield to the temptation to “curse” God. (Job 2:9-10) In these scriptures Job reveals another misunderstanding he had concerning God. He states, “*But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.*” Again, we read that Job did not sin, he did not “curse God.” However, the question we need to ask concerning Job’s reply to his wife is, “Does God give out and dispense evil?”

The book of Job progresses from a beginning point where Job starts out with a mistaken understanding of the God He loved and this continues throughout much of the Book. Job and His “friends” speak to each other in “circles” of incorrect theology and just “plain ole religiosity.” Below are some “mistaken” and “misplaced” thoughts and attitudes by these “finite men” concerning an “infinite God.”

- “*It is all the same; that is why I say, ‘He destroys both the blameless and the wicked.’ When a scourge brings sudden death, he mocks the despair of the innocent. When a land falls into the hands of the wicked, he blindfolds its judges. If it is not he, then who is it?”* (Job 9:22-24) – Does the Lord really destroy the blameless and the wicked?
- “*Are not the days of my life few? Let me alone, that I may find a little comfort.*” (Job 10:20) – Job tells God to leave him alone so that he could find comfort. Can we find true comfort in anyone or anywhere else? The only one who can truly give the comfort we need is the “Comforter,” Himself.
- “*Who is the Almighty that we should serve him? What would we gain by praying to him?”* (Job 21:15) – Is this the way we should think towards our God. Is He a God who is so far away that He does not hear us or desire to answer our prayers?
- “*You have turned cruel to me; with the might of your hand you persecute me.*” (30:21) – Are cruelty and persecution found in the character and nature of our God as He is described in the scriptures?

The understanding that Job and his “friends” had was typical for all those living in the times of the Jewish scriptures concerning God – they had a zeal for God but yet lacked the true and full understanding or knowledge of God. Paul says this in Romans 10:2, “*For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.*” Also, we must remember that satan was not fully exposed until Jesus, the “Light of the World,” came and exposed satan’s darkness, wickedness and evil. In their zeal and love for God they thought that it was God who brought evil upon them. They thought that it was God who took things away from them and caused these great calamities.

We must take note - as Job and his friends were conversing with each other, we see that God manifested one of His most loving aspects of His character and nature – His longsuffering towards men. Job had suffered tremendous loss. He was in the throes of deep, deep grief. Even as a believer, take it from me, when tragedy strikes such as a sudden death of a loved one, the loss of property, the infidelity of a spouse, etc., that grief can make you say and think many “funny” and “mistaken” things – even concerning God.

When my first wife passed away, I am not so proud of the “melt down” times I had and some of the “conversations” I had with God. However, because I was real and honest about my feelings and disappointments concerning God in that situation I was able to hear what was down deep within my inner most being as I “let it all out.” I must admit it wasn’t pretty. I am blessed to let you all know that I never got

to the point of “cursing God” but I totally understand what may have been going on in the mind of Job. In those times, God was so loving, compassionate and longsuffering as He listened and let me get it out. He then came to me in a way very similar to how He came to Job and let’s just say, straightened me out.

The “friends” of Job that came to “comfort him” really brought accusations and condemnation instead of comfort. Job may have thought that it was God behind the calamities but his “friends” were convinced it was because Job had “secret sin.” It was their understanding that calamities only happened because of sin. Unfortunately, this belief is found in the hearts and doctrines of many believers and churches, today. Jesus dispelled that theory in Luke 13:1-5 – *“There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”*

As we know in the final chapters of Job, God comes to Job and tells him the truth – Job did not truly know the God that he loved, feared, worshipped and obeyed. God begins in Job 38:1 as we read, *“Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Who is this that darkeneth counsel **by words without knowledge**? Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me.”* Notice, that after God allowed Job to “get it all out,” Now, He came to set Job straight. He gets right to the crux of Job’s problem - Job had spoken words “without knowledge.” Job had spoken in his own finite understanding of an infinite God. In the chapters and verses that follow, God goes into a discourse concerning who He was, is and always will be.

In response to this “explanation” given to Him by God, the only thing that Job could think of doing was to repent. He never did curse God. He never yielded or gave in to that strategy of satan. That was why God showed His love and His longsuffering towards him. However, Job did repent for the mistaken attitude and mistaken understanding he had of his God. We read of this in Job 42:1-5, *“Then Job answered the LORD, and said, I know that thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from thee. Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have **I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.** Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore **I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.**”*

Not surprisingly, we see another man in the scriptures that also had a little bit of a meltdown concerning God and had expressed an incorrect understanding of His God. What is surprising, however, is that I am referring to Jeremiah. In Jeremiah 15 we see that he was experiencing tremendous persecution for being the “prophet of God” and speaking what God wanted to be said. The people did not accept his prophetic words. Jeremiah was feeling despair and despondency. In the midst of adversity sometimes things that are deep down within our soul can come bursting out. This was one of those moments for Jeremiah. In Jeremiah 15:18, Jeremiah blurts out the thing that was “festering” within concerning how God was dealing with him and dealing with the situation he was in. He questions God by stating, *“Why has my pain been perpetual? And my wound incurable, refusing to be healed? Will you indeed be to me like a deceptive brook? With water that is unreliable?”* (Jeremiah 15:18 AMP)

If we really listen to what Jeremiah is saying to God we can “hear” that he is actually calling God deceptive and unreliable as well as being unfaithful to him. He is questioning God concerning why he is in this mess. After all, Jeremiah was doing the Lord’s work and everything, therefore, should be going smoothly and everyone should hear him, heed him and most importantly like him. However, just the opposite was happening. Jeremiah was experiencing hurt, disappointment, frustration and yes, even a bit of anger towards God because it was not happening the way he thought it should be. Was God really going to let Jeremiah’s pain be forever? Does God really refuse to heal? Is God deceptive and unreliable?

Let’s see how God responds to Jeremiah’s accusations as he speaks in Jeremiah 15:19 AMP – *“Therefore, thus says the LORD [to Jeremiah], “If you **repent** [and give up this **mistaken attitude** of despair and self-pity], then I will restore you [to a state of inner peace] So that you may stand before Me [as My obedient representative]; And if you separate the precious from the worthless [examining yourself and cleansing your heart from **unwarranted doubt** concerning My faithfulness], You will become My spokesman. Let the people turn to you [and learn to value My values] -- But you, you must not turn to them [with regard for their idolatry and wickedness].”*

Notice, God tells Jeremiah to repent from his “mistaken attitude” and “unwarranted doubt” concerning his God. Jeremiah was steeped in self pity and despair which both are affects of grief. If Jeremiah repented from this “mistaken attitude” then he would be able to continue to come before God and be His “obedient servant.” Just as Job had a “mistaken attitude” concerning the thought that God’s “gives and then takes away,” another mighty man of God had a “mistaken attitude” and “unwarranted doubt” concerning God’s faithfulness. Both of these men were told by God that they needed to repent of these “mistaken attitudes” toward Him, to which they both did. God still loved them both even with their incorrect understanding concerning Him, His ways and His thoughts. He loved them so much that He brought correction to them and told them to repent and turn from those incorrect understandings and mistaken attitudes.

As we conclude, we must always take and read the scriptures within their context and not take any one scripture out and make it say what it really isn’t saying. A good way of reading and studying the scriptures is to read the scriptures within the context of the chapter it is in; then the context of the book or letter that that chapter and verse is in; then that book or letter in the section of the Bible it is in – the New Testament or the Jewish scriptures; and then within the context of the totality of the entire Word of God.

The scriptures are clear...

- James 1:13-17 (KJV) – *“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”*
- John 10:10 (KJV) – *“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”*
- Romans 10:29 (AMP) – *“For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable [for He does not withdraw what He has given, nor does He change His mind about those to whom He gives His grace or to whom He sends His call]”*

...and many, many, many more!!!

God is the giver of all good things. The greatest gift he gave us was Jesus. John 3:16 states, *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”* He will never take that “Gift” away. Yes, God is so very, very good!!!