

# BEWARE OF THE ADVERSARY!

(Scripture: Job 1:6-12)

## Introduction:

We have come to a critical passage of Job here. It is important to know that the book of Job was written in different time periods by different authors. It began during Pre Moses period as a great story, then more material was added during Solomon's period and Babylonian captivity time. Some people say, even after Jesus' time some parts may have been added! Example: My redeemer liveth? (Job 19:25). Some of the first few verses from this first chapter are from Solomon's wisdom movement because we can see those same phrases, and also the introduction of the name of "The Satan". Yes, with definite article!

"The Satan" pointed to the title of a position and not as a position. Then later he was called as Satan and the devil. So, it is important to remember that today's portion was not in the original story which was written before Moses' time. These must have been added after Solomon's regime by some unknown author.

The following passages are the toughest one to crack, and we must be very careful to avoid falling into dangerous theological discussions that questions God's character and integrity! Anytime, a shadow of doubt is cast in God's character through some Bible passage, I will hold God's character as holy and blameless, and I will question those texts that raise that doubt. I will diligently check to see if there is translation or manuscript problem or additions done in later period. So be ready to read this passage like eating fish. Beware of the bones! Do not swallow it just like that and become a bad theologian!

### *Job 1:6*

*6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them.*

This verse raises many hard questions! We all believe that Satan lifted up himself before God, and he got pushed down from heaven. Then how come he was able to stand before God with other angels?

If this meeting took place before the fall of Satan, then how come Job came into existence?

Why should this story be presented more like a competition between the devil and God? There are more questions, fewer answers.

Similar story can be found in 1 Kings 22:19-23 confirms the strange ideas and visions of the authors at their times!

### *1 Kings 22:19-23*

*19 Micaiah said, Therefore, hear the word of the LORD. I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right and on His left.*

*20. The LORD said, Who will entice Ahab to go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one said this while another said that*

*21. Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD and said, I will entice him."*

*22. The LORD said to him, How? And he said, I will go out and be a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. Then He said, You are to entice him and also prevail. Go and do so'*

*23. Now therefore, behold, the LORD has put a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; and the LORD has proclaimed disaster against you."*

What? God orchestrating a lying spirit to make Ahab go to the battle. Stories like this assault God's character and holiness. The story could have been simply told here as Ahab was led by greed and ego so decided to go for the battle! We must question vehemently any passage that challenges the character of God's holiness, righteousness, and justice. Many people conclude that God is evil because of these authors' bizarre stories! When we eat fish, we must be careful to swallow just the flesh, and not the bones. Likewise, we must chew such passage very carefully.

☞ There is no need to question God's sovereignty, and His character.

☞ There is no need that God must give explanation to His created beings why He allowed certain sufferings in our lives!

☞ There is absolutely no need to find out the exact reason for every suffering in our life.

The story behind "It is well with my soul song" will validate my point! I am sure many of you have heard this story before, yet I am repeating it for the sake of children. Also, I want all of you to pay attention to this story to see how this person handled his "why" part of his suffering! There is some extra detail also in this story.

In the 1890s Horatio G. Spafford was known as one of Chicago's most successful lawyers and businessmen. Through the years his investments in real estate along the shores of Lake Michigan in Chicago had paid off handsomely. In 1871 Mr. Spafford wrote to some of his friends that he felt that he was "sitting on top of the world." He had a loving wife, four beautiful daughters, a profitable business empire, and a successful law practice.

Who would have ever thought that the action of a single farm animal could change all of that? That is exactly what happened on a night when Mrs. O'Leary's cow kicked over a lantern in her barn. This triggered the great Chicago fire. In just a few hours Spafford's wealth was burned to ashes. He told his friends that all he had left of his business empire was his university diploma.

Although Spafford was devastated by all of this, his financial fall affected his wife hardest of all. ☹ Her doctor suggested that a vacation might help her. Spafford arranged for an extended family trip to Europe. Just prior to the scheduled departure, Spafford received a phone call about a pressing business matter in Chicago. He told his family to go ahead and that he would join them later.

Somehow in the middle of the ocean the ship strayed into the path of a British ship. Both were traveling at full speed. In twelve minutes, 226 people lost their lives. Seven days after the accident, when the survivors landed at Cardiff, Wales, Spafford received a two-word telegram from his wife — "Saved. . .alone."

Spafford booked the first ship bound for England. As he was sitting out on the deck, the ship's captain approached him and said, "Mr. Spafford, we are approaching the spot where your daughters now rest." Instead of being grief-stricken as he had thought he would be, Spafford said that a peace came over him as he remembered the words of his friend, Dwight L. Moody. Moody had told him, "**One of these days you are going to read that D. L. Moody is dead. Don't you believe a word of that; I'll be more alive than than I am now.**" Spafford said that he felt the girls' spirit around him.

Rather than cry, he smiled. Rushing to his cabin, Spafford picked up a pen and paper and jotted down the words that were suddenly on his heart:

When peace, like a river, attendeth my way  
When sorrows like sea-billows roll.  
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,  
It is well, it is well with my soul. (sdretire.com)

The most interesting part of this story is that Spafford never went after the 'WHY' part of his tragedies. He never asked those tough questions!

☞ Who caused all this mess in Horatio's life?

☞ Was it God or Satan?

Had Spafford taken that path of searching for the answer for his evil, he would have been a very miserable person. How does it matter if God did it or Satan did it, or God allowed Satan to do it? If our heart is clean, and if a tragedy happens for some mysterious reason, it is better to handle the situation as Horatio did! It is well with my soul! All things will work out for good for those who love God!

If we encounter suffering for some unknown reason, we must accept the sovereignty of God, and pray for strength to just move forward. Trying to figure out why it happened will make us angry, worried, and anxious! It is a sheer waste of time. Follow the steps of Spafford and accept it with the grace and peace of God. Something good will always come out of our tragic circumstances.

Spafford's story could have been told to us like in the Job and Ahab passage - what went on between God and devil, and Spafford's suffering could have been explained that way. But thank God, no one did it that way!

But Job's story did not continue that way! Because the authors of book of Job were very particular about the why part of the story, and Job and his friends were made to go after the answers for this "WHY" question! Let us fathom how Job's story shapes up with this bizarre heavenly court scene of God.

*Job 1:7.*

*"The LORD said to Satan, 'From where do you come?' Then Satan answered the LORD and said, 'From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it.'"*

The omniscient God knows everything but still asks Satan where he came from! This is the best way to check if someone is telling the truth or not!

Satan's answer is interesting! He was roaming about the earth. Peter warns about the role of Satan in

*1 Peter 5:8 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 But resist him, firm in your faith, .....*

*James 4:7 says resist the devil and he will flee from you!*

Jesus says that the thief comes to kill and destroy! Jesus also describes Satan as the prince of this world. Yes, Satan rules the worldly-minded people, and it is his daily business to annihilate them.

The author dramatizes this scene further with a strange conversation.

*Job 1:8,9 8The LORD said to Satan, Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil.”*

It is a bizarre anthropomorphic language (supernatural things explained in human language) written by wisdom era author or someone from Babylonian captivity. It is an awkward way of forcefully bringing Job's name into this supernatural conversation. It is a boastful conversation also. Now God seems to repeat the same wisdom phrase about Himself, fearing God and turning away from evil.

Come to think of it, it is only half truth. Definition of fearing God is more than that.

☞ Fearing God is not just avoiding evil, but to obey His Word always.

☞ Fearing God also means showing reverence for who He is, and giving honor, glory, and praise. Bible does not make every detail complete. It just gives us enough to understand to some extent. We must gather more detail through Scripture from other passages and expand our thinking.

A word of caution before we go any further.

Our God is holy and righteous, and He is not the instigator of evil.

Through this story of Job, we tend to hold God responsible for all our sufferings. Let us not do that. Also, Jewish theology claims if anyone suffers, it is because of that person's sins. We will see it very clearly in Job's story. My advice to you:

☞ do not run with strange passages like that and come to a quick conclusion.

☞ do not judge, do not jump to conclusion!

☞ Do not mischaracterize God's character ever again quoting odd passages like this from the Bible!

*Job 1:9,10*

*9. Then Satan answered the LORD, Does Job fear God for nothing?*

*10. Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.*

Satan is an accuser. He accuses that Job fears God because of His favors and blessings! If the Lord takes them away, he will curse?

There is some truth in Satan's statement. When we are surrounded by the presence of God, it will protect us as a hedge. No unclean spirit can come near us. Devil cannot touch us. Except the Lord blesses us, all our works are in vain.

When we have the presence of God, we have His protection, and blessings! Seek always the presence of God and

His peace that surpasses all understanding, and it will rule us and protect us. Let His peace flow like a river even through our calamities! May we love God even more, and not less!

Spafford's story being told without God or Satan and without any reason of "why it happened" is the way to approach Job's story!

*Job 1:11,12 11 But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face.” 12Then the LORD said to Satan, Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him.” So, Satan departed from the presence of the LORD.*

Satan challenges God to strip away everything from Job. Then he claims that Job's mask of trust in God will fall, and he will curse! God takes this challenge and allows Satan to attack Job, but on one condition. Job himself cannot be touched personally.

If this dialogue is true, we may be forced to answer lot more difficult questions! The most important question is

☞ why God and Satan use human beings as pawns for their games?

☞ Why Job's faith is put to such a sadistic hard test?

☞ Why should Job's children and their families lose their precious lives just like that because of this heavenly challenge?

When we try to answer these questions using this strange passage, our God will not appeal to us as loving, merciful, just God! No wonder many people are running away from God after reading such passages.

But it challenges us to obey one important command from God. Can we afford to forego our loved ones and material wealth just like Job for the sake of God?

Do you see yourself with material things and loved ones surrounding you?

Is your heart and soul attached to the worldly possessions and your loved ones?

It is perfectly ok to get attached to our loved ones. But one day we are going to be removed from our loved ones! All our loved ones will pass away sooner or later or we may pass away one day leaving them behind.

Will we be able to let go off our loved ones at that time? If we are prepared to let go off our loved ones, then it must be really easy for us to let go off our worldly possessions also.

We may want to ask this serious question: do we love Jesus more than these?

Are we indeed prepared to lay down our life for Christ? As our Lord Jesus Christ said, are we prepared to take up the cross and follow Him? We will see next week how well Job handled his tragedy. He said, God gives them, and He takes them away. Let His name be glorified. Can we develop that kind of maturity? Let us examine ourselves!

## **Conclusion:**

Life is full of twists and turns. It is not always downhill, expect tough uphill climbing too.

Praise God for the still waters, as well as our experience through stormy waters.

No matter what experience we go through, our Lord is always present with us. His rod and staff shall comfort us.

Stop asking the "why" questions. It will lead to a bitter spirit. Take every suffering as an opportunity for spiritual growth and maturity.

In Christ, it will always 'it is well with our soul! Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.

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