

CHAPTER 7

Job and Psalms

As we continue on our trip through the Old Testament, we must now leave the history books and move ahead into the poetry books. There are six poetical books found in the Old Testament: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon and Lamentations. In this chapter we will study the first two poetry books, **Job and Psalms**.

Hebrew Poetry

Old Testament Poetry (Hebrew Poetry) is somewhat different from English poetry. Usually when we think of English poems or songs, we think of putting words together that rhyme. Here's a simple example:

JESUS LOVES ME THIS I **KNOW**
FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME **SO**

LITTLE ONES TO HIM **BELONG**
THEY ARE WEAK BUT HE IS **STRONG**

In the above example, it is easy to tell which words rhyme. This is poetry based on **similarity of sound** (words that rhyme and sound alike). Hebrew poetry is not so much based upon similarity of sound but upon **similarity of ideas**. In Hebrew poetry two ideas are placed together in certain ways. This is called **parallelism**.

What is Parallelism?

When you think of "**parallelism**" think of the word "**parallel**." And when you think of "parallel" think of railroad tracks. Railroad tracks are parallel. The two tracks are next to each other and run parallel to each other. There are three kinds of parallelism found in the poetical books of the Old Testament. Let's think about each of these!

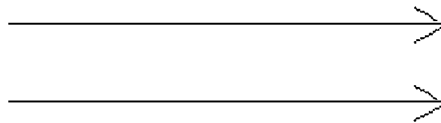
Synonymous Parallelism

In this kind of parallelism an idea is **repeated**! Something will be said and then the same thing will be said in different words. Here is an example from Job 4:17:

Shall mortal man be more just than God?
Shall a man be more pure than his Maker?

Notice that the second line repeats the idea of the first line. The same thought (or in this example, the same question) is repeated but in different words. The second line echoes the thought of the first line.

If we think of our two railroad tracks, we can say that both tracks are running in the same direction:



In synonymous parallelism, both tracks (statements) are saying essentially the same thing, only using different words.

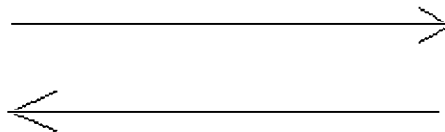
Antithetic Parallelism

In this kind of parallelism an idea is **contrasted!** One idea will be given and then an opposite thought or idea will be given. An example of this is found in Proverbs 12:2:

**A good man obtaineth favour of the LORD:
But a man of wicked devices will He condemn.**

Here we see that the second line gives a thought in contrast to the first line. The first line speaks of a good man and the second line speaks of a wicked man. The good man is blessed and the wicked man is in trouble (condemned!). The second line presents a different or opposite idea.

If we think of our two railroad tracks, we could imagine the tracks running in opposite directions:



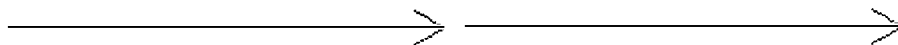
Synthetic Parallelism

In this kind of parallelism the second half of the verse expands or develops the thought of the first half. One idea is given (first half of the verse) and then this idea is explained in more detail, or new information about this idea is given (second half of the verse). An example of this is found in Proverbs 16:5:

**Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD:
Though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished.**

The first part of this verse tells us that God hates those who are proud (God hates the sin of pride). The second part of the verse tells us something else about those who are proud. Not only does God hate those who are proud but He will punish those who are proud!

If we think again of our two railroad tracks, we could imagine one track being put down and then the other track carrying the idea further along:



Can You Recognize Parallelisms?

Look at the following verses and write down either **synonymous parallelism** or **antithetic parallelism**:

Psalm 1:6 _____

Psalm 25:4 _____

Numbers 23:19 (second part of verse) _____

Psalm 34:10 _____

Proverbs 15:1 _____

THE BOOK OF JOB

Why Do the Righteous Suffer?

An Ancient Book That is Very Up-To-Date!

The book of Job is probably the most ancient book of the Bible. It was written long before Moses wrote his five books (Genesis through Deuteronomy). Many believe that Job lived about the time of Abraham. This means that what we read about in this book took place about 4000 years ago! But even though Job is such an ancient book, it has a message for modern men!

Who Was Job?

There are many people who think that Job was just an imaginary man who never really lived on planet earth. They feel that the book of Job is a nice story about a man named Job, but they do not believe that it is a **true story** about a **real person** who lived in history.

Before a person begins reading the book of Job, he needs to realize that Job was a real person just like Christopher Columbus, George Washington and Abraham Lincoln were real people.

Read Ezekiel 14:14 and 14:20. Who is the One speaking these words (notice the last four words in verse 14)? _____

What three people does God mention? 1) _____ 2) _____ 3) _____

Was Noah a real person who lived in history? _____ (Note: See Matthew 24:37-38. Jesus believed that Noah really lived in history!)

Was Daniel a real person who lived in history (read what Jesus said in Matthew 24:15)? _____ Therefore, Job is just as real as Daniel and Noah! He was a real man who really lived on planet earth! Can you find a verse in James chapter 5 that mentions the man Job? Verse: _____ James knew that Job was a real man who really lived! Let's find out what happened to this man.

The Man Who Lost Everything But His Faith!

To learn what happened to Job, there are really only three chapters that you need to read. The first two chapters tell us about all that happened to Job and the last chapter (Job chapter 42) tells us how this amazing true story ends! The other 39 chapters seek to answer the **key question** in

the Book of Job: *Why do the righteous suffer?*

As the book begins, we are introduced to Job. What kind of a man was he (Job 1:1)?
 _____ (the word
 "eschewed" means "avoided, turned aside from").

In chapter 1 verse 6 God has recorded for us information about a heavenly scene. We can actually listen in on a conversation between God and Satan! Satan thought that Job served God because of all the good things that God had given to him (Job 1:9-10). What did Satan think would happen if all of these good things were taken away (Job 1:11)?

The LORD then gave Satan permission to touch "all that he _____" (Job 1:11) but he was not allowed to hurt or touch Job himself (Job 1:12).

Satan has amazing power, but he can do nothing without God's permission. As we read Job 1:13-19, we read about the horrible things that Satan caused to happen. According to these verses, what are some of the things that Job lost?

Satan thought that Job would curse God when these things were taken away. Was Satan correct (Job 1:20-21)? _____ Did Job sin against God (Job 1:22)? _____ Do you think Job was aware of the conversation between God and Satan? _____ As far as Job was concerned, God was the One who had taken away all that he had (Job 1:21--"the _____ hath taken away")! And Job was right! Even though Satan did these things, we can also say that God did them! God is in control of everything that happens and Satan could never have done what he did without God's permission.

Satan Touches Job

As we begin reading Job chapter 2 we again are able to listen in on a conversation between God and Satan. This time Satan thought that the real test for Job would be to hurt his body. What did Satan think that Job would do when his own body was afflicted and in pain (Job 2:5)?

Did God give Satan permission to hurt Job's body (Job 2:6)? _____ Did God give Satan permission to take Job's life (kill him)? _____

Satan went forth and did his work (Job 2:7-8)! Was Job aware of the conversation between God and Satan? _____ Did Job know the reason why he was afflicted with such painful boils?

Satan thought that Job would curse God. Was Satan correct (Job 2:9-10)? _____ Did Job sin against God with his lips (Job 2:10)? _____

**GOD PROVED A POINT TO SATAN AND
 GOD SHOWED ALL THE ANGELS THAT SATAN WAS WRONG!**

Job's Three Friends

At the end of chapter 2 we meet Job's three friends (verses 11-13). These three friends tried to comfort Job but they did not do a very good job! Here's what Job thought of them: "**Miserable** _____ are ye _____" (Job 16:2)! These men told Job the wrong thing! They said something like this: "God is punishing you, Job! The reason you are suffering is because you have sinned! Suffering is the outcome of sin! We see that you are suffering so this means that you must be a wicked man! Since the penalty must fit the crime, and since the penalty is very severe, then you must have sinned greatly against God."

This makes us think again about the **key question** in the book of Job: **WHY DO THE RIGHTEOUS SUFFER?** These three friends answered the question in this way: "The righteous do not suffer! Only the wicked suffer, and since Job is suffering he must be guilty of sin."

As we try to better understand this problem there are several things we need to remember:

1. Sometimes the wicked do suffer for their sins. For example, some of the Corinthian believers became very sick because of sin (1 Cor. 11:29-31), and Ananias and Sapphira both dropped dead because of their sin (Acts chapter 5).
2. In the next life, the wicked (unsaved) will suffer because of their sins. The righteous will prosper in heaven, but the wicked will suffer in hell (Matthew 25:41,46).
3. Sometimes in this life the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer (Psalm 73:3,12,13,14).
4. Job was a perfect and upright man who avoided evil. How do we know this? **GOD SAID SO** (Job 1:1 and Ezekiel 14:14,20)!

The Real Reason for Job's Suffering

We already know the reason for Job's suffering: **God allowed this suffering in order to prove a point to Satan!** But remember, Job did not know this! And through all of this suffering God wanted to teach Job something very important and make him a better person (Job 23:10).

In the last chapters of the book of Job, **God Himself** talked to Job! God gave Job an amazing test or examination! He asked Job question after question! Look at Job chapters 38-41. About how many questions did God ask Job? _____

Job did not have many answers to these questions! He flunked this test! All of these questions pointed out how great and how mighty and how wise God really is! God wanted Job to realize **Who He was!** And even though Job flunked the test, he got the message!

The Key Verse

The key verse is found at the end of the book of Job, in chapter 42:5--"I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye _____ Thee." Something wonderful happened to Job! He finally got a glimpse of God and saw God as He really is! He finally saw **how Great God is!**

Here is what Job finally realized: "I finally understand WHO GOD IS! I do not know why I am suffering, but this one thing I know: God knows what He is doing and God knows what is best! I don't have to understand everything! My God understands everything!" Job's suffering helped him to learn wonderful things about His God!

There may be things happening in your life or things happening to you that you do not understand. There may be things happening *to you* that you do not understand. You might cry out, "**Why is this happening to me?**" Some things in life are very hard and difficult and we want to know why these things happen. Let's remember the lesson from the book of Job: "I do not know why, but God does! God knows what He is doing and God knows what is best for me! I don't have to understand everything! My God understands everything and I trust Him!"

The book of Job has a happy ending! How did God bless Job (Job 42:10-17)?

When we come to the New Testament we learn about the suffering and death of the only really innocent and truly righteous Man--the Lord Jesus Christ! Why did the righteous Christ suffer? The answer is found in 1 Peter 3:18!

THE BOOK OF PSALMS

The Hebrew Book of Worship and Song

The book of Psalms is one of the best loved parts of the Bible. The book of Psalms was the Hebrew book of prayer and praise. As we read the Psalms we are reading the words of men who are praying to God and praising God and telling others how great God is!

The Psalms are easy to find. Just open your Bible to the middle and you will probably be somewhere in the Psalms (or at least close to them!). Most of the Psalms were written by David, who is called "the sweet _____ of Israel" (2 Samuel 23:1). The word "psalm" means "a poem sung to the accompaniment of musical instruments." The Psalms were actually SONGS that were SUNG! David was a great songwriter and he would sing these songs while at the same time playing his harp (1 Samuel 16:16,18,23). David wrote most of the Psalms, but he was not the only song writer. Who wrote Psalm 90 (look under the words "Psalm 90" in your Bible)? _____ Who wrote Psalm 72?

The Key Verse

There are so many important verses in the Psalms that it is difficult to pick one key verse (you could probably find a key verse for each Psalm!). But the general theme of the Psalms is **praise**, and so the very last verse in the Psalms (Psalm 150:6) is a good verse to choose as a **key verse**: "Let everything that hath breath _____ the LORD. Praise ye the _____." God wants His creatures to praise Him! The Psalms are filled with **praise** (telling God how great He is and telling others how great God is!).

The Longest and Shortest Psalm

One of the Psalms is the longest chapter in the Bible and one of the Psalms is the shortest chapter in the Bible. Look quickly through Psalms 110-120. Which Psalm is the shortest? _____ Which Psalm is the longest? _____ In this longest Psalm the Word of God is mentioned in almost every verse! Also the name of God is mentioned in every verse (either directly or by a pronoun)! God and His Word were very important to the man who wrote this long Psalm! (**Note**: Some people believe that Ezra wrote Psalm 119).

DIFFERENT KINDS OF PSALMS

There are many different kinds of Psalms. Let's think about some of these kinds:

Alphabetical Psalms

There are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet. In an alphabetical Psalm, the first verse begins with the first letter of the alphabet and then the second verse begins with the second letter of the alphabet, etc., until finally the last verse begins with the last letter of the alphabet. In English we have 26 letters. If we were to write an alphabetical song we would start the first verse with "A" and we would start the 26th verse with what letter? _____

The most famous alphabetical Psalm is Psalm 119 (some Bibles even have the Hebrew letters printed before each section). This is the longest of all the Psalms. It has 22 sections of eight verses each. In each section, all eight verses begin with the same letter of the Hebrew alphabet. You cannot see this unless you look at a Hebrew Bible (perhaps your teacher can show you this).

Hallelujah Psalms

The word "HALLELUJAH" is a Hebrew word which means "**Praise ye the LORD.**" The HALLELUJAH Psalms end with a **Praise ye the LORD.**

The shortest Psalm in the Bible (Psalm 117) is a **Hallelujah** Psalm. Can you find others?

Thanksgiving Psalms

Why do you think Psalm 136 is called a Thanksgiving Psalm? (Notice the first and last verses.) What is repeated in every verse of this Psalm? _____

Praise Psalms

How many times do you find the word "**praise**" in Psalm 150 (Just six short verses)? _____

Historical Psalms

Some Psalms take us on a trip back through past history to remember the great things that God has done for His people. What are some of the great events in history that we learn about in Psalm 105?

Penitential Psalms

This word means "repentant, sorry for wrong and willing to make it right by confessing sin and turning back to God." Some of the Psalms are prayers of men who have sinned against God. For example, Psalm 51 is David's prayer after he fell into a great sin. What verse (or verses) shows us that David confessed his sin? _____ These kind of Psalms help us to know what we should do when *we* sin against the Lord.

Imprecatory Psalms

This word means "to pray for or invoke evil upon." Some Psalms remind us of God's holy anger against sinners and how God will judge the wicked and destroy them. One of these is Psalm 58. Notice the strong words that David uses when he speaks about wicked men and what God should do to them because of their sins.

Messianic Psalms

These are Psalms that tell us about the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself said that the Psalms tell us things about Himself (see Luke 24:44---"and in the _____ **concerning Me**"). We should go to the Psalms looking to find Christ!

One of the most amazing Messianic Psalms is Psalm 22 (known as the **Crucifixion Psalm**). This Psalm was written by David about 1000 years before Jesus Christ went to the cross, and yet in this Psalm there is an amazing description of death by crucifixion. Can you find a verse which speaks of the Roman soldiers piercing Christ's hands and feet? Verse: _____ In verse 1 are found the very words which Christ spoke from the cross (see Matthew 27:46). Do you find verses that tell us about people making fun of Christ and mocking Him at the foot of the cross? _____ Does verse 18 remind you of what the Roman soldiers did with Christ's garments? Can you find verses that speak of the pain and suffering and nakedness of crucifixion? _____

There are other Messianic Psalms which speak of Christ's resurrection and his coming again as King!

Heart Book

Psalms is a heart book. The Psalmist tells us to "pour out your _____ before _____" (Psalm 62:8), and this is what David and the other writers do in the Psalms. These men were completely honest before God! When they were sad or discouraged or fearful they told God just how they felt. How did the Psalmist feel in Psalm 42:5-6?

_____ When the Psalmist was happy and joyful, he let God and everyone else know it! When David sinned, he poured out his heart to God and honestly confessed the wrong that he did (Psalm 51:3-4). As you read the Psalms you are reading that which came deep from the hearts of men. What they wrote and what they sang came from their hearts. Whether it was in times of sorrow and grief or whether it was in times of great joy and gladness, the book of Psalms shows us God's people pouring out their hearts before Him.

This is just what God wants His believers to do today. God wants us to be completely honest before Him. When we pray to God, we should pour out our hearts before Him and tell God exactly how we feel and exactly how we think. God already knows what we feel and think, but God wants us to be honest about these things! Can we ever fool God? _____ (See the first part of Psalm 139.) If we are sad or lonely or afraid or worried, these are just the things that God wants us to talk to Him about. Do you spend time in prayer? Do you pour out your heart before Him? Do you talk to God about how you feel and think? Are you honest before God? Do you lift up your voice and sing to God? It does not matter what kind of a voice you have, the important thing is that you let what is in the heart flow out through the lips in prayer and thanksgiving and praise. The *more we read* the Psalms the better we will learn how to pray and worship and sing and praise God *from the heart!*