

**Curse God and Die, by Daniel H. Kuhn, Jr. 18061008**

**Job 1:1, 2:1-10 and Hebrews 2:5-12**

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Have you ever felt as though someone were playing around with your life? Do you think, when you experience the sorrows and joys of the roller coaster of life, that you might be someone's chess piece? That is what this first part of the story of Job implies. It begins with God's proudly talking with Satan about how faithful his servant Job was.

Job was a rich man. He was rich in wealth. He owned thousands of sheep and camels and had many servants. He was rich in family closeness. His sons and daughters would feast in each other's homes. Wouldn't we like our children to have such close relationships! Job was protective of his children. He made offerings to God for them, just in case any of them had sinned.

Job had as good a relationship with God as we could imagine! Then, trouble hit. Satan and God had a discussion about Job's faithfulness. Satan challenged God, saying that if Job faced calamity, he wouldn't be as faithful to God.

So, the game, using Job as a chess piece, began. The Sabeans carried off his cattle and killed his servants. Fire burned his sheep. The Chaldeans carried off his camels, and a great wind blew his son's house down, killing all of his children.

In all this, Job did not sin, and consoled himself by saying that he was born with nothing and he will return to God with nothing. "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord."<sup>1</sup>

Satan and God had another conversation. Satan challenged God saying, "Of course he's been able to remain faithful to you, "But if you touch his bone and his flesh, he'll curse you."<sup>2</sup> So, Satan inflicted terrible sores on Job's skin, but still, Job remained faithful.

Neither you nor I would have this kind of patience with God. If we thought God were responsible for the deaths of our children, we would probably curse God. That's what Job's wife said: "Curse God and die," as if to ask, "Why do you remain faithful to God when God has caused you so much pain?"

Job did remain faithful. He disregarded his wife's admonition, saying, "Why should we accept the good from God and not the bad?"<sup>3</sup> We have friends and perhaps even spouses who are like Job's wife. There are people who try to talk us out of doing the good thing, the right thing. They say, "Why do you go to all that trouble? You're not getting anything good in return." "Why do you spend all that time at church?" "Why do you work with those kids?" "Why do you still believe in God after all the cruel things we see going on in the world?"

Job's wife might have said what she did out of compassion. She knew the rules. If you cursed God, you would surely die. She wanted to see her husband put out of his misery, scraping the sores from his skin with pottery. "Curse God and die. Then, at least, your agony won't be prolonged." Perhaps *we* have said the same kind of thing. "Oh, you poor dear, can't someone put

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<sup>1</sup>Job 1:21

<sup>2</sup>Job 2:5

<sup>3</sup>Job 2:10

you out of your misery?”

Perhaps Job’s wife was simply angry. After all, she was the mother. She lost her children too. If God was at fault, then she may have been willing to curse God and die also.

For your information, Job’s wife did not die because of what she told her husband. She is mentioned later on in Chapters 19 and 31. We do not hear of Satan again in the book of Job. Which brings us to the use of Satan in Job.

“Satan” in Job is not to be thought of as the devil, a man with horns running around in a red suit with a long pointed tail. He is not even to be thought of as an evil person. Satan in Job should be spelled with a small “s.” The word here is used to describe both human and heavenly beings who act as adversaries or accusers.<sup>4</sup> In Job, we should read this as “the satan,” or “the accuser.” In short, there is a dialogue between God and one of the heavenly beings. This satan is not an evil figure in the way we think of satan, but rather as one who engages in dialogue with God.

While we think of the book of Job as being about the meaning of suffering, it is also a book about dialogue. First, there is the dialogue between the satan and God. Then, there is the dialogue between Job and his wife. Then, dialogue among Job and three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. Finally, there is dialogue between Job and God.

In each case, it is dialogue that brings out meaning and truth— a deeper sense of faith— a deeper sense of the reality of God—and of human existence. Between the satan and God, dialogue brings out the motivation of piety. Why should one worship God? Just so things go well?

Between Job and his wife, dialogue brings Job to a deeper understanding of his relationship with God. That relationship extends through the painful times as well as the prosperity.

Among Job and three friends, dialogue brings out the meaning of suffering. Job claims his innocence as his three friends suggest that his suffering was caused by sinning.

Finally, between God and Job, dialogue brings out the reality of the proper place of humans in relationship to God. We were not around when God created the universe, so we should not presume that we can know God’s ways. We cannot attribute human suffering to God. We are creatures and God is the Creator. So, we approach God with wonder and awe, knowing that we are beloved by God.

We humans are always subjected to opposing points of view. Where is truth? In dialogue with others, especially those who disagree, we reach deeper truths. In dialogue with others, we can deepen our faith in God.

Does God conspire to give us pain? No. We are no one’s chess piece, not God’s, not satan’s, and not our employer’s. We are created by God with free will to worship God or to ignore God.

God is not playing with us. Let us not play with God.

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<sup>4</sup> New Interpreter’s Bible, “Job” p. 347