

I'm about to tell you some things about myself that will probably mess with your tidy little theological picture. Of course, you can avoid any uncomfortable thinking by assuming that the book of *Job* is just poetry. In fact, I recommend you do just that. After all, you don't want to suffer any mental strain or discomfort, do you?

You see, your finest scholars know very little about the book of *Job*, so how important can it be? The first line of the book says that its story takes place in the land of Uz. Uz? What kind of name is that? Sounds like a bad cough... Your best scholars don't have a clue where that land is located, or if such a land ever existed.

That probably leads you to conclude that the story is very old, maybe in a time long before Abraham. Don't waste your time trying to figure it out. Nobody knows when the story took place. Some of your researchers did make this observation... since Job had camels, the story took place in a time and place after camels were domesticated. That's a great clue. Even if that is right, it just points to Asia, the Middle East, and northern Africa after 3000 BC. Now that really pins it down!

And the people in the story! Who really believes that those characters really existed? There are no records that they did exist outside of the Bible. You don't know where, you don't know when, you don't know if the people existed! Seems to me like a total waste of time for you to learn about something that clearly needs more vetting; the book of *Job*.

Ok, I can't resist it. My pride is making me tell you my favorite story about myself. I know, I know, you think pride comes before the fall. Not so in my case... I've already fallen.

Back to the land of Uz, wherever that is. A man named Job lived in the land of Uz. This man was blameless, he was as righteous as a man could get. He revered God and shunned evil. Boring. How boring that Job was. He shunned evil, shunned me.

This Job was some kind of rich by any measure. He had seven sons and three daughters. He owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, a thousand oxen, and five hundred donkeys. He had a large number of slaves and servants. That dude was rich, richest man there was. And respected! Everybody respected him.

Now, many rich men have had messed up families, but not Job. His kids loved one another and loved to have big parties. Did I mention Job was a fanatic? He was so fanatical that after one of their parties he would sacrifice to God on their behalf just in the off chance that one of them

had sinned and cursed God. It was his regular custom. Fanatic! I hate people who have it all together.

Now, time to mess with your theology. If you don't believe this next part, look it up. Job Chapters One and Two. You will find it there.

One day the angels come before the Lord, and I come with them. The Lord says to me, "Where have you come from?" Get that? The Lord and I have a conversation... maybe not like best buddies, but certainly face to face. I am in the Lord's presence and I certainly am not pure or sinless or anything like that.

"Here and there, roaming all over the Earth," I answer, setting a little trap.

Falling into my trap, God says, "Did you notice my servant Job? He is so special, nobody like him. Blameless and righteous. Fears me, shuns evil."

"Of course he is. You protect him and his family from everything. He is crazy rich and has an amazing family. It's great to be Job...but...take away everything he has and he will surely curse you to your face."

Trap Sprung. I love it when I put God in a no-win situation. Doesn't happen often, but I sure do it this time.

God says, "OK, it is within your power to take everything except his health."

So, what do you think about that? Without hesitation God allows me to harm his precious little Job, and his family. What kind of loving God is that?

In my long, long life, I don't think I ever had so much fun as what came next. I planned, and planned how to take Job's stuff. All of it.

I waited until his precious children were having a party at the house of the oldest son. Then, BAM! I had the vicious Sabeans attack and take all of the oxen and donkeys, and kill the nearby servants. I had fire come down from the sky, so it would look like it came from God. It burned those sheep into little crispy critters, and killed the servants as well. I sent the crazy Chaldeans in three raiding parties to steal the camels and kill those servants. All his stuff, right? Not yet!

I sent a mighty wind from the desert that caused the house to collapse on Job's children. Dead. All of them...and the servants. Delicious! Everything Job had...gone. But that's not the best part.

With every horrible event, I allowed one servant to survive. They rushed, one-by-one to tell Job. I made sure they arrived one after the other. In forty-two seconds, they told Job what had happened. Now that was fun!

All those innocent children and servants, killed for no reason.

Job got up and tore his robe, and shaved his head. I expected him to cut his throat, too. But no....he fell to his knees and worshiped the Lord. He said the craziest things: "I came to this world naked, and I will depart the same way. The Lord gave and the Lord took away. Praise the name of the Lord." In all this, he did not sin by blaming God. And, after God allowed me to do that to him!

A few heavenly days later, the angels and I come to present ourselves to the Lord again. Like old friends, God asks me where I've been. Same answer, same trap set. Same response from God about Job...but God adds, "Job still maintains his integrity, although you incited me against him to ruin him without reason."

Oh, I have a reason, but Job surely could not know that.

I tell God, "The stuff was nothing, really. Life, that's what's important. Take that away, and he will curse you to your face."

Falling into my trap again...I think...God says, "Job is in your hands, but you must not kill him."

Kill him? No way. I will make him suffer more than any man has ever suffered. That will surely cause Job to curse God.

How to make Job bodily suffer? In your wildest dreams, you cannot imagine what I imagined. So, here is what I settled on...cover him with excruciating sores and boils from the soles of his feet to the top of his head. Start with that, and then watch him get worse with time. His skin will rot, his breath will stink.

Nobody will want to be around him. He will be banished from society, banished to live with the crazy people in the garbage dump, lose every bit of self-respect and dignity he ever had.¹

I will make sure he loses everything... everything. Except one thing. His wife.

¹ Various verses throughout the book show that all of these things happened to Job.