



Good News
Bible Reading Program

A free educational service provided by the United Church of God, *an International Association*

— February 2005 —

DATE	READING TOPIC	SCRIPTURES
1-2 Feb	Genealogies from Adam to Abraham's children	1 Chronicles 1
3-4 Feb	The family of Israel, starting with Judah	1 Chronicles 2
5-6 Feb	The family of David	1 Chronicles 3
7-8 Feb	More on the family of Judah; The Simeonites	1 Chronicles 4
9-10 Feb	Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh	1 Chronicles 5
11-12 Feb	The Family of Levi	1 Chronicles 6
13-14 Feb	Issachar, Benjamin, Naphtali, west Manasseh, Ephraim and Asher	1 Chronicles 7
15-16 Feb	The descent of Saul from Benjamin	1 Chronicles 8
17-18 Feb	Dwellers in Jerusalem; Levitical responsibilities; The Family of Saul	1 Chronicles 9
19-20 Feb	Introduction to Job	
21-22 Feb	Job pious and prosperous; Perseveres through trials	Job 1-2
23-24 Feb	Job's initial lament	Job 3
25-26 Feb	Eliphaz's first speech: The innocent do not suffer	Job 4-5
27-28 Feb	Job's response: Pleading for comfort	Job 6-7

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Highlights to Think About From This Month's Reading

The Genealogies (1 Chronicles 1)

February 1-2

Our readings now concentrate on the third division of the Hebrew Scriptures, the *Ketuvim* or “Writings” (often referred to by the Greek name *Hagiographa*, meaning “Sacred Writings”). Jesus referred to this section as the Psalms (Luke 24:44), as the book of Psalms opens the section in the traditional Hebrew arrangement. We have already read a number of books and passages from the Writings in chronological harmony with the books of the Prophets. We now pick up those we have not yet covered.

We turn first to the first nine chapters of Chronicles, which contain genealogies from Adam to the post-Exilic period. The story flow of Chronicles, which we have already covered, begins in chapter 10 with the end of Saul’s reign and the commencement of David’s rule. Yet there is much information preceding the story flow in the book.

Recall that Ezra is the likely compiler of the book of Chronicles and that, in arrangement order, the book appears last in the Hebrew canon. *Halley’s Bible Handbook* states in its notes on chapters 1–9: “These genealogies seem to have had for their immediate object the resettling of the land according to public records. Those who had returned from the captivity were entitled to lands formerly held in their own families.... [Just] so, the priesthood was hereditary in families...[And it was the same] with the kingly line of David. The most important and precious of all promises was that the world’s Savior would come in David’s family. The central interest of these genealogies is their tracing the descent of David’s line...Most of the genealogies are incomplete, with many breaks in the lists. But the main line is there. They were probably compiled from many records which had been written on tablets, papyrus or vellum, partly copied from preceding Old Testament books.”

Indeed, the information in chapter 1 can be found earlier in different parts of the book of Genesis: Adam to Noah (1 Chronicles 1:1-4; see also Genesis 5); the descendants of Noah (1 Chronicles 1:5-23; see also Genesis 10); Shem to Abraham (1 Chronicles 1:24-27; see also Genesis 11:10-26); the family of Ishmael (1 Chronicles 1:28-31; see also Genesis 25:12-16); Abraham’s descendants through Keturah (1 Chronicles 1:32-33; see also Genesis 25:1-4); and the family of Esau (1 Chronicles 1:35-54; see also Genesis 36).

Beyond the reasons mentioned above, is there more to the scriptural incorporation of these incessant lists that go on for nine chapters at the beginning of the book of Chronicles? *The Bible Reader’s Companion* states in its notes on 1 Chronicles 1–3: “At least eight different purposes of O[ld] T[estament] genealogies have been suggested. (1) To show relationships between Israel and neighboring peoples. (2) To show relationships between elements in the story of Israel’s origins. (3) To link periods of time not covered by other material. (4) As a means of organizing Israel’s men for warfare, by tribe and family. (5) To demonstrate the legitimacy of a person or family’s claim to a particular role or rank. (6) To preserve the purity of the chosen people and/or its priesthood. (7) To affirm the continuity of the people of God despite expulsion from the Promised Land. (8) To demonstrate progress toward achieving God’s revealed purposes; to show that the Lord is sovereignly shaping history in accord with His own plan. The genealogies of the O[ld] T[estament] play a vital role in maintaining the integrity, and showing the continuity, of Scripture’s story of salvation” (Lawrence Richards, 1991).

Halley’s Bible Handbook concludes in its notes on 1 Chronicles 1–9: “These 9 chapters of genealogies form the generation-to-generation tie up of all preceding Biblical history. They need not be read, for devotional purposes, as often as some other parts of Scripture. But in reality these, and similar genealogies, are the skeleton framework of the Old Testament, the thing that binds the whole Bible together, and gives it unity, and makes it look like real *history*, not legend.”

Discrepancies in Judah’s Family Record? (1 Chronicles 2)

February 3-4

Chapters 2–4 concentrate on the descendants of Judah, particularly the descendants of Judah’s son Perez. Yet some descendants of Judah’s son Shelah are given (see 4:21-23). And a few descendants of Perez’s twin brother Zerah are mentioned. Verse 6 of chapter 2 lists Zerah’s sons as Zimri, Ethan, Heman, Calcol, and Dara and says that there were five of them in all. Compare this with 1 Kings 4:31: “For [Solomon] was wiser than all men—than Ethan the Ezrahite [i.e., Zerahite or Zarhite], and Heman, Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all the surrounding nations.” The parallel names here would seem to identify Ethan the Ezrahite or Zerahite with Ethan the son of Zerah. Yet Ethan

the Ezraite, composer of Psalm 89, lived after the time of David since his psalm mentions God's covenant with David and even later transgressions by David's descendants. So it seems that the "sons" of Zerah in 1 Chronicles 2:6 must refer to descendants—so that the total of "five" probably refers to those noted for greatness still remembered when Chronicles was recorded. Carmi in verse 7 was another descendant of Zerah noted only for being the father of Achar—the Achan of Joshua 7. (Carmi, named also in 2 Chronicles 4:1, was, according to Joshua 7:26-18, the son of a descendant of Zerah named Zabdi.)

Moving down to 1 Chronicles 2:15, note that David is referred to as the seventh son of Jesse while 1 Samuel 16:10-11 and 17:12 clearly state that Jesse had eight sons. Various suggestions have been offered, including one son not surviving much beyond 1 Samuel 17 to have children or receive an inheritance. Another that some have postulated is that the missing son may have had a different mother than the seven mentioned in 1 Chronicles. Whatever the case, the matter is not irresolvable. As usual, such apparent discrepancies actually give the text a more legitimate feel, as the author of a falsified record would likely have been careful to avoid introducing such problems.

This brings us to another matter in 1 Chronicles 2. In its note on verse 18, *The Nelson Study Bible* states: "This Caleb [the son of Hezron and brother of Jerahmeel] was not the famous companion of Joshua (Num. 13:6; Josh. 14:6, 7), who lived several centuries later, during the conquest of Canaan. In fact, one of this Caleb's descendants, Bezalel (v. 20), was a craftsman charged with constructing the wilderness tabernacle (Ex. 31:2)." The later Caleb, son of Jephunneh, is mentioned a few chapters later in 1 Chronicles 4:15. Yet the earlier Caleb, referred to again in 1 Chronicles 2:42, is said to have had a daughter named Achsah (verse 49)—who was evidently the daughter of the later Caleb.

What are we to make of this? In its note on verse 49, the same study Bible states: "The Caleb of Joshua's time had a daughter named Achsah, who became the wife of Israel's first judge, Othniel (Judg. 1:12, 13). It might appear that the Caleb here in Chronicles must be the same as the later Caleb, but this is ruled out by the consistent use of Caleb throughout the chronicler's genealogy [here] to refer to an earlier individual by that name. The meaning probably is that Achsah is the 'daughter' of the earlier Caleb in the sense that she is his descendant. The later Caleb was doubtless a descendant of the early one, a conclusion supported by the record that both were from the tribe of Judah (2:4, 5, 9, 18, 42; Num. 13:6). But is there more to the explanation?"

Consider the following lengthy quote regarding 1 Chronicles 2 from Swiss commentator Henri Rossier in his *Meditations on the First Book of Chronicles*. The matter is a bit complex and involved but helps to counter the idea that Scripture is in error here:

"Caleb's genealogy offers a striking example of this disorder [that in some cases existed among the Jews' genealogical records after the Babylonian Exile] and of how fragmentarily the genealogical registers were preserved. Caleb (who is not without purpose, I think, called Chelubai in v. 9) is the son of Hezron and the great-grandson of Judah. We find his genealogy in verses 18-20, and the descendants of his two wives, Azubah and Ephrath. In verses 42-49 we again find descendants of this same Caleb by his concubines. He is called the brother of Jerahmeel (the son of Hezron, v. 9). But at the very end of this enumeration we are suddenly brought into the presence of Achsah the daughter, as we know, of Caleb the son of Jephunneh (Josh. 15:16). In verses 50-55, for the third time in this chapter, we meet the descendants of Caleb, the son of Hezron, through Hur, the first-born of Ephratah, a part of whose genealogy has already been given us in verse 20. [The King James Version makes the Caleb of verse 50 the son of Hur, who was son of the original Caleb of verse 18 (son of Hezron). However, most translations show the Caleb of verse 50 to be the *same* as the original Caleb of verse 18—the *sons* of Hur (rather than singular *son* in the KJV) being his descendants.] Finally, in 1 Chronicles 4:13-15 we find the descendants of Caleb the son of Jephunneh and of his brother Kenaz. But here now, in this portion, this genealogy is truncated.

"Must we conclude from all this that the text of Chronicles is a human and capricious compilation and that thus the historical value of this book is nil? This is what the rationalists assert, but thank God, their reason is always at fault when it attacks His Word. No enlightened Christian will deny that the genealogies of Chronicles are composed of fragments gathered up in the midst of general confusion, yet documents upon which God sets His seal of approval. So it is true that a number of passages in these genealogies are of very ancient origin, not mentioned in the other books of the Old Testament.

“Caleb’s fragmentary genealogy, which we have cited above, is very instructive in this regard. We know from a number of Scripture passages (Num. 13:6; Num. 14:30, 38; Num. 32:12; Num. 34:19; Deut. 1:36; Josh. 14:13) what favour Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, won from God by his perseverance, moral courage, faithfulness, and zeal to conquer a portion in the land of Canaan. The Lord’s approval was upon him, whereas Caleb, the son of Hezron and of Judah, despite his numerous descendants, is not mentioned as the object of God’s special favor. But if the fragmentary genealogies of Caleb the son of Judah are proof of the existing disorder, God puts these fragments together for a special purpose, and we find a deeper thought in them. Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, is the one whom God has particularly in view, as the Word teaches us; he is the one whom He introduces in so extraordinary a way into the genealogy of the son of Hezron (1 Chron. 2:49). It is in view of him that this genealogy is inscribed next to that of David, as forming part of the tribe of Judah, from whence the royal race comes.

“But what connection does Caleb the son of Jephunneh, whose daughter was Achsah, have with Caleb the son of Hezron? Here we find a most interesting fact which has perhaps not been given sufficient attention. Caleb the son of Jephunneh was not originally of the people of Judah. In Numbers 32:12 and Joshua 14:6, 14 he is called Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite. Likewise, Caleb’s younger brother Othniel, to whom Caleb gave his daughter Achsah as wife, is called ‘the son of Kenaz’ (Joshua 15:17; Judges 1:13; Judges 3:9, 11). Now in Genesis 36:11 we learn that Kenaz is an Edomite name. Hence the conclusion that at some point of time the family of Kenaz, and therefore the family of Caleb the son of Jephunneh, was incorporated into the tribes of Israel just as so many other foreigners, such as Jethro, Rahab, and Ruth, who in virtue of their faith became members of the people of God. This explains a characteristic phrase in Joshua 15:13: ‘And to Caleb the son of Jephunneh he gave a portion among the children of Judah according to the commandment of Jehovah to Joshua...that is, Hebron.’ And in Joshua 14:14: ‘Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite to this day, because he wholly followed Jehovah the God of Israel.’”

“Thus Caleb, who by his origin really had no right of citizenship in Israel, received this right amidst Judah by virtue of his faith and was incorporated into the family of Caleb the son of Hezron, as it appears in 1 Chronicles 2:49 and in the passages already cited in Joshua. The fragments preserved of the genealogy of Caleb the son of Hezron confirm the place that God assigned to Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and this substitution is one of the important points the Spirit of God calls our attention to here.”

The Line of David (1 Chronicles 3)

February 5-6

We earlier read the listings of David’s wives and children at the beginning of chapter 3 in conjunction with the events of his life (see the earlier Bible Reading Program comments on 1 Chronicles 3:1-5 with 2 Samuel 3:2-31 as well as the comments on 1 Chronicles 3:5-9 with 1 Chronicles 14 and 2 Samuel 5:11-25). And we followed the lineage of the Davidic kings through the history of Judah.

The lineage here is shown progressing from Jeconiah or Jehoiachin, the Jewish king taken into Babylonian exile, to Zerubbabel, the governor of the first return, to his son Hananiah (verse 19) and then Hananiah’s sons Pelatiah and Jeshaiiah (verse 21). Also mentioned in this context are the sons of Rephaiah, the sons of Arnan, the sons of Obadiah, and the sons of Shechaniah—followed by descendants of Shechaniah. *The Nelson Study Bible* notes on verses 21-24: “These names were detached from the Zerubbabel genealogy and may be other Davidic families.... Four generations of Shechaniah, ending in Anani, are listed. Hence the genealogy of vv. 17-24 presupposes about seven generations. Since Jeconiah reigned around 598 B.C. (v. 17), a date of approximately 425 B.C. for Anani is reasonable. Anani is the latest generation recorded in Chronicles, and any dating of the book should take this into account.”

The Prayer of Jabez (1 Chronicles 4)

February 7-8

Chapter 4 gives more details about the family of Judah. “Sons” in verse 1 refers to descendants, for of those listed here only Perez was Judah’s actual son (2:3-4). The outline of the genealogies of Judah is as follows: Shelah, son of Judah (2:3; 4:21-23); Perez, son of Judah (2:4-8; 4:1-20); and Hezron, son of Perez and ancestor of David (2:9–3:24).

But there is more in 1 Chronicles 4 than just genealogy. In the midst of the nine-chapter-long list of names, a very short but remarkable story appears out of the blue about a man named Jabez (verses 9-10). It’s as if a camera were scanning a crowd of faces and all of a sudden stopped and focused on a single individual.

We know almost nothing about Jabez, but you may well have heard of a popular book about his prayer published in 2000 by author Bruce Wilkinson titled *The Prayer of Jabez: Breaking Through to the*

Blessed Life. A number of other books and articles on the subject have followed so that the prayer has become a phenomenon among a number of people—with some unfortunately treating it as some sort of magic formula to get blessings from God. Some of late are focusing on this passage more than any other part of the Bible, and some perhaps almost to the exclusion of the rest of the Bible! That is of course not at all what God wants. For one thing, Christians are to approach God through the name of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, we know from Christ's teachings on prayer that God doesn't want or hear rote prayers (Matthew 6:7), but rather He wants believers to talk to Him in prayer the way a son or daughter would talk to a father. So merely memorizing and reciting the prayer of Jabez is not a key to divine blessing. That being said, despite the wrong approach some have taken we can in any event draw some valuable and helpful lessons from this brief but fascinating story.

The name Jabez means "pain" or "sorrow"—his mother having named him this because she bore him "in pain," that is, "in Jabez." What would have motivated a mother to give her newborn child such a name? It must have been something more than the common physical pain of childbirth. More likely, her life must have been such that she perceived the addition of this child would bring great hardship or difficulty. Perhaps she was in financial straits. As the account says that Jabez was more honorable than his brothers, it may be that she already had sons who had caused problems and feared Jabez would do the same.

Whatever the case, Jabez probably did not have an easy life. Can you imagine growing up with a name like Pain or Sorrow? The teasing from peers would have been relentless. Worse, in Middle Eastern society of that day a name was thought to be a meaningful determiner of destiny. His life was "marked out," so to speak, by his name. He would have been expected to be a perpetual source of pain. And this is not to mention the difficult family situation of growing up with a mother who would give such a name to her child and the dreary circumstances that would have provoked it.

All that being said, Jabez responded to his situation with more honor than the rest of his family. There is only one way out of a nowhere life—and Jabez realized it. So what did he do? Let's notice the prayer of Jabez.

1. *He called on the God of Israel.* Before we can even begin to deal with whatever difficult situation we find ourselves in, it is vital that we recognize that there is only One who can ultimately help us—the God of Israel. Jabez was part of the covenant nation of Israel and called on the nation's God—the only true God. Perhaps he knew the story of Jacob wrestling with God, not letting go until God blessed him and thereby receiving the name Israel, "Prevailer With God." We should recognize that Jabez probably did not just call on God on one afternoon. His prayer was likely a regular one to God—pleading with Him to deliver him from his life's circumstances. And it was probably uttered in various sincere ways, not recited as some kind of mantra.

2. *He prayed earnestly for God to truly bless him.* He said, "Oh, that You *would...*," expressing a great desire. And he did not just ask to be blessed, but to be blessed *indeed*—that is, really and truly blessed. While this might have included physical substance, this is not stated. It probably included spiritual well being. Most likely, he was asking God to bless Him in every way possible, trusting that God would do it. Some would perceive this as selfish, but we shouldn't jump to that conclusion. As God says that Jabez was honorable it is likely that he was a service-oriented person, seeking the means and opportunity to better serve God and others. Moreover, God says we are to pray to Him for those things we need and desire. The point is that, in praying to Him, we recognize God as the One who is able to fill our wants and needs—and we trust Him to do so.

3. *He prayed for God to increase his boundaries.* His plea to God to "enlarge my territory" makes it look like Jabez's desire was for land and wealth. But the word can be translated territory, boundary, border or coast. It was more likely a request for God to increase the boundaries of his life—to extend his limits beyond those in which he had been confined. Of course, it may have concerned his physical means. Perhaps it involved the recovery of a squandered family inheritance. We can all ask God to increase our affluence, grow our business or extend our influence—if our goal is to serve Him and others. We should all want to be more and do more for God and to have the physical means to do more for others. Only He can give us the means to accomplish this.

4. *He prayed for God's help and direction.* In asking for God's hand to be with him, Jabez recognized that he could not go it alone. He had asked for great blessings and an extension of boundaries. Humanly, he would not even be able to handle this. That's why he needed God's guidance and power to

enable him to meet the demands of the blessings and boundaries for which he was asking. He realized his total dependence on God.

5. *He prayed to be kept from evil.* The Hebrew word translated “evil” has a broader meaning than malicious acts we commit or that are committed against us. A more appropriate translation in this context would be “afflictions” or “adversities”—any bad circumstances in life that adversely affect us and our loved ones. We should always be mindful of the need for God’s protection and not take it for granted. This is quite like Jesus’ instruction that we pray, “Deliver us from evil.” We are asking God to protect us from those evil forces and circumstances that would harm us—especially the evil *one*, Satan the devil, this society over which he reigns, and our own corrupt natures which he has influenced.

6. *He prayed to not be a source of harm to others.* This man who had grown up with a reputation for having caused pain to his mother and a name from her seemingly destining him to be a source of pain wanted no more of it. He wanted to escape. More importantly, he simply did not want to hurt others. This was an attitude of loving one’s neighbor. As Romans 13:10 says, “Love does no harm to a neighbor...” Indeed, the verse goes on to say that fulfilling God’s law is love—as His law forbids harming others. We see here that Jabez had an attitude of living by God’s law and covenant. It was this more than His nationality that gave him the right to call on the covenant God of his nation.

So we see it isn’t a matter of saying certain words in prayer, but rather of having the right heart or character. When we seek the right heart, living the way we understand God wants us to live, the “right” words will come when we talk with Him in prayer. God blesses the person with the right heart, not the one who utters a “magic prayer.”

Jabez prayed his heartfelt, desperate prayer for great blessing and a changed, hope-filled life...and something remarkable happened: “So God granted him what he requested” (1 Chronicles 4:10). This should fill us all with hope and faith. As the late U.S. President Ronald Reagan once stated, “There is nothing impossible for man, if he will only join himself in prayer to God!”

Interestingly, the name Jabez appears in only one other place in Scripture—two chapters earlier in 2:55 as the name of a place where the scribes dwelt. It could be that the Jabez of chapter 4 acquired this land as part of the answer to his prayer and then used it in God’s service.

Verse 11 of chapter 4 recommences with the genealogies so matter-of-factly that many do not even notice the remarkable two verses prior.

As for the end of chapter 4 concerning the family of Simeon, we earlier read these verses (24-43) in conjunction with King Hezekiah’s preparation to rebel against Assyrian rule (see Bible Reading Program comments on 2 Kings 18:7-8; 1 Chronicles 4:24-43 and 2 Kings 20:20). The Simeonites who dwelt in the south of Judah were able and likely encouraged at this time to expel neighboring peoples and take over their land. Note that they pursued the perennial enemy of Israel, the Edomite Amalekites, into Mount Seir—that is, the land of Edom in what is today southern Jordan.

The Trans-Jordanian Tribes (1 Chronicles 5)

February 9-10

Chapter 5 concerns the tribes who settled east of the Jordan—Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh.

Notice verses 1-2 in the New Revised Standard Version: “The sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel. (He was the firstborn, but because he defiled his father’s bed [when he slept with his father’s concubine Bilhah] his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph son of Israel, so that he [Reuben] is not enrolled in the genealogy according to the birthright; though Judah became prominent among his brothers and a ruler [“the chief ruler,” King James Version] came from him, yet the birthright belonged to Joseph).”

This passage is important in explaining two things. First, the transfer of the birthright from Jacob’s firstborn son. And second, the fact that the birthright and kingship were split up. Reuben, though the firstborn of Jacob by his first wife Leah, was not permitted to receive the birthright blessing upon his descendants (or the promise of kingship) because of the defilement he brought on himself. Instead the two elements of birthright and scepter were split out and went to the next two in line. The kingship went to the fourth son of Jacob by Leah, Judah, skipping over Leah’s second and third sons, Simeon and Levi, presumably because they were not entitled to tribal territory and dominion, having disqualified themselves through their cruelty (Genesis 49:5-7; 34:25-30). The birthright went to another firstborn, Joseph—Jacob’s firstborn by his other wife Rachel (skipping over Jacob’s children by his concubines Bilhah and Zilpah).

This chapter further informs us that in the days of Saul, the Reubenites and Gadites fought against the Hagrites (verses 10, 18-19), perhaps meaning descendants of Hagar (and thus Ishmaelite or related

Arab tribes). “The Hagrites and their allies were probably desert peoples who felt increasing pressure from the expanding Israelite population. Their efforts at resisting the Israelites took place in the days of Saul (v. 10), though the narratives of Saul do not mention them” (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verse 19). We see here in the midst of these genealogies another example of crying out for God’s help and His answering prayer (verses 20-22)—though here God answers collective prayer rather than that of an individual, as in the previous chapter with Jabez.

Finally, we earlier read the end of chapter 5, regarding the trans-Jordanian tribes’ deportation to Assyria, in harmony with Israel’s history in the book of Kings (see Bible Reading Program comments on 2 Kings 16:6-9; 15:29-31; 1 Chronicles 5:23-26; 2 Kings 17:1-2; 16:10-18; 15:38; 2 Chronicles 27:9).

The Family of Levi (1 Chronicles 6)

February 11-12

As *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* explains in its introductory notes on the chapter: “Chapter 6 commences with Pentateuchal citations and concludes with territorial lists taken from Joshua, but it consists primarily of materials not found outside Chronicles. It takes up four major subjects: the line of the high priests (vv. 3-15, 49-53), the three clans of Levi (vv. 16-30), the Levitical musicians (vv. 31-48), and the cities that were assigned for the tribe’s use (vv. 54-81). The Levitical organization of David’s day receives further treatment in chapters 23-26”—which we read earlier in the Bible Reading Program.

Note the distribution of the Levites in the land. The priests were mainly given towns south of Jerusalem, with the remainder of the tribe of Kohath receiving towns just north of Jerusalem. Merari had cities in the Trans-Jordan area east of Jerusalem and in Zebulun in the northwest part of the country. Gershon had cities in the northern part of the country.

Chapter 6 also gives us an interesting detail bearing on biblical chronology: “David’s musician Heman, 1000 B.C., is eighteen generations removed from Moses’ adversary Korah, in 1445. This poses a problem for those advocating a late date for the Exodus, in the 1200’s...let alone those who would place Levi’s grandson Izhar within the same period” (note on verses 33-37).

The Rest of Israel (1 Chronicles 7)

February 13-14

Chapter 7 contains the genealogies for other tribes of Israel. Not much is said in these chapters of the family of Naphtali (verse 13). And nothing at all is said of the descendants of Dan and Zebulun. The reason for this is not known. *Expositor’s Bible Commentary* suggests that “these tribes may simply have had little influence or relevance among the Jews who made up Ezra’s community.”

Verses 20-27 gives the descent of Joshua from Joseph’s son Ephraim. “The fact that there were nine generations between Joshua, the famous successor to Moses, and Ephraim (vv. 23-27) supports the view that the story in vv. 21, 22 [of the men of Gath killing Ephraim’s sons] occurred before the Exodus” (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verse 27).

The Benjamite Lineage of Saul (1 Chronicles 8)

February 15-16

Chapter 8 gives a more detailed lineage of Benjamin than the one in chapter 7, because this one is concerned with showing the descent of Israel’s first king, Saul. *The Nelson Study Bible* notes on verse 32 regarding the mention of Jerusalem: “Since Saul was not yet born at this point in the genealogy, the Jerusalem here is the city of pre-Davidic times. Jerusalem remained under Jebusite control until David conquered it (2 Sam. 5:6-10). Perhaps at this time the Benjamites lived among the Jebusites.”

In verse 33, Saul’s youngest son is referred to as *Esh-Baal*, meaning “Man of Baal,” perhaps demonstrating Saul’s apostasy from God, though *Baal*, meaning “Lord” or “Master,” could sometimes refer to the true God. Notice, however, that this son of Saul is referred to in 2 Samuel and elsewhere as *Ishbosheth*, which is probably a euphemistic reference by the biblical writers as it means “Man of Shame.”

Also note that in 8:34 and 9:40, Jonathan’s son is *Meribbaal*, possibly meaning “Opponent of Baal,” “Loved by Baal” or “Baal Is My Advocate.” As Jonathan was apparently faithful to God, the first meaning here seems likely, though again it may be that the name Baal here is used for the true Lord. We should also consider that *Saul* could have given his grandson this name. Meribbaal’s name was later changed to *Mephibosheth*, meaning “Exterminator of Shame” or “He Scatters Shame,” the *shame* probably referring to idolatry. After Jonathan’s death, Mephibosheth was brought by David to his palace to live there as royalty (2 Samuel 9).

Jerusalemites, Levitical Responsibilities and the Family of Saul (1 Chronicles 9)

February 17-18

The reference to the “book of the kings of Israel” in verse 1 is evidently not to the biblical books of Kings, as these contain no genealogies.

Expositor’s comments in its introduction to this chapter: “Chapter 9 itself is sometimes assigned to the period of Persian restoration...or even equated with a list of Nehemiah’s during his own time (444 B.C.), of those who lived in Jerusalem and of those who resided outside (Neh 11:3-24). But while this latter document exhibits the same order in its categories (perhaps because based on 1 Chron 9), caution is advised. Thus [as one scholar] admits: ‘The two lists are not so alike as sometimes supposed...’ The M[asoretic] T[ext] has about eighty-one names for Nehemiah 11 and about seventy-one for Chronicles, of which only about thirty-five are the same or nearly so. Moreover some of these have a permanent relevance, e.g., names of priestly courses (vv. 10, 12) or of genealogical ancestors (vv. 11, 16), which are not subject to change in any event.”

In other words, it is not clear whether the list of people dwelling in Jerusalem in verses 3-9 predates or postdates the Babylonian Exile. Some suggest that the reason for highlighting the inhabitants of Jerusalem is to put the focus on the city of David in contrast to Saul’s city of Gibeon in the previous chapter. “While both cities were important centers, God had not chosen Gibeon. But He did choose Jerusalem, not [merely] as Israel’s political capital but as the location for His temple. It was in Jerusalem, where the ark [i.e., the Ark of the Covenant] rested, that God met with His people. It was Jerusalem where the priests offered sacrifices for sin. It was Jerusalem where the Levites led in worship” (*Bible Reader’s Companion*, note on 8:1–9:44).

Jerusalem is “the apple of God’s eye” (Zechariah 2:8). Beyond the focus of 1 Chronicles 9, the place had been special to God even long before the children of Israel dwelt there. Mount Moriah, the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, had been the place God sent Abraham for the test with Isaac (Genesis 22:2). Indeed, Jerusalem was the site chosen by God for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and it will be the city from which God will later rule the world and even the universe.

Finally, verses 35-44 present again the family of Saul, basically repeating 8:29-38—but here the purpose is to segue into the story of the tragic end of his life and reign related in the next chapter of Chronicles (which we have already read).

Introduction to Job

February 19-20

Contained within the Writings section of the Old Testament are what are often referred to as the Poetical or Wisdom books: Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes and Job. Chronologically, the first among these is evidently the book of Job—or at least the story contained within the book appears to precede most of the material in the other Writings. We did not read the book of Job in harmony with earlier sections because its chronological placement is not completely clear and its contents are not crucial to the story flow of the Law and Prophets. Nevertheless, Job is directly mentioned in the Prophets as an illustrious example, along with Noah and Daniel, of righteousness (see Ezekiel 14:14, 20). And it is possible that he is mentioned in the Law as well, as we will see.

Job is widely considered to be one of the great, epic works of literature. The famed 19th-century French author and playwright Victor Hugo said, “The book of Job is perhaps the greatest masterpiece of the human mind.” Of course, as part of Scripture, it is not ultimately a product of the human mind—though God did inspire a human being to write it down. The 19th-century Scottish historian Thomas Carlyle said: “I call this book, apart from all theories about it, one of the grandest things ever written. Our first, oldest statement of the never-ending problem: man’s destiny, and God’s ways with him in the earth. There is nothing written, I think, of equal literary merit.” Religious encyclopedist Philip Schaff said, “The book of Job rises like a pyramid in the history of literature, without predecessor and without a rival” (all quoted in *Halley’s Bible Handbook*, introductory notes on Job).

Yet who it was who penned the book of Job is not named. Jewish tradition credits Moses, and that is certainly possible as the book’s story seems to have preceded him. Others maintain that Job himself may be the author—or perhaps the author of a record that was used by another author, again possibly Moses, as the foundation on which to create a dramatic narrative and series of lofty orations. Yet even many who accept the great antiquity of the story believe it was initially passed down through oral tradition and then written down much later. Some see it as the work of Solomon, as he compiled the wisdom of the East.

Because the work is poetic in structure, some today try to paint Job as an allegorical, fictional character. Yet the literary genius of the work should not lead to the conclusion that the events and dialogue recorded in it are not genuine. The reference in Ezekiel 14 clearly portrays Job as a historical figure. He is also mentioned in the New Testament: “You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful” (James 5:11).

So who was Job? When and where did he live? The answers to these questions are not known with certainty. Indeed, it is not necessary to know them to appreciate and benefit from the story, themes and lessons of the book. There is a palpably timeless quality about the book of Job. He represents all believers in our struggle to cope with the hardships of life and maintain our trust and confidence in God come what may.

Still, there are a number of clues to the historical setting of the book of Job. The evidence points to Job living in patriarchal times. For instance, he offered sacrifices. Yet in the period after Israel became a nation, sacrifices were to be performed by the Levitical priests. This would indicate that Job lived before this period.

The Expositor’s Bible Commentary states in its introductory notes on the book of Job: “It seems likely that Job himself lived in the second millennium B.C. (2000 to 1000 B.C.) and shared a tradition not far removed from that of the Hebrew patriarchs. Job’s longevity of 140 years, his position as a man whose wealth was measured in cattle and who acted as priest for his family, and the picture of roving Sabeian and Chaldean tribesmen fit the second millennium better than the first.... The book shows considerable Aramaic flavor that may mean Job and his friends lived near centers of Aramaic influence. Aram-Naharaim [the area in which the family of Abraham’s brother Nahor lived] was such a center in northern Mesopotamia. At the end of the millennium, some Aramean tribes moved south and settled on the borders of Babylonia and Palestine; but Arameans continued to control the caravan route through the Khabur River area. This was the time when Aleppo and Damascus became Aramean centers and when the Chaldean tribes invaded Babylonia.... If Job 1:17 means that Chaldean tribes were still roving, the event could reflect a time before they settled at about 1000 B.C.”

The same commentary further explains Job’s name in its historical setting: “The English name ‘Job’ comes from the Greek *Iob*, which derives from the Hebrew form *Iyob*. Earlier attempts to determine an etymology of the name have given way to evidence from a well-attested west Semitic name in the second millennium found in the Amarna Letters, Egyptian Execration texts, Mari, Alalakh, and Ugaritic documents. The original form of the name was *Ayyabum*”—related to the biblical name Jobab.

Gleason Archer’s *New International Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* gives more information on this, noting that renowned archaeologist William F. Albright “suggested that Job may have been a contemporary of the patriarchs of the pre-Mosaic age. He supports the credibility of Job by the authentic second-millennium employment of the name *’Iyyob*. (It should be noted that in the Berlin Execration texts, *’Iyyob* appears as the name of a Syrian prince living near Damascus; in the Mari documents of the eighteenth century B.C., *Ayyabum* is mentioned; and in the Tell el-Amarna correspondence from about 1400 B.C., *Ayab* is referred to as a prince of Pella [in what is today northwestern Jordan].) Albright also certifies the credibility of the name of Bildad (one of Job’s three “comforters”) as a shortened form of *Yabil-Dadum*, a name found in the cuneiform sources of the early second millennium” (1982, p. 236).

What of Job’s nationality? Exceedingly wealthy, he was referred to as “the greatest of all the people of the East” (Job 1:3)—“East” most likely from the perspective of the land of Israel. More specifically, Job lived in the land of Uz (verse 1). Genesis 10:22-23 lists Uz as a son of Shem’s son Aram, father of the ancient Aramaeans or Syrians. Genesis 22:20-22 lists a Huz, essentially the same as Uz, as the firstborn of Abraham’s brother Nahor. So there could be some relation to the people dwelling near the Euphrates. Then again, according to Lamentations 4:21, Edom was in the land of Uz. *Expositor’s* states: “It seems then that Uz might have been the name of a region east of Palestine including the Edomites and adjacent tribes.”

Uz is also listed in the Bible as a son of one of the Horite chiefs, Dishan son of Seir, who lived in the land of Edom (Genesis 36:20-21, 28). Recall that Edom was another name for Jacob’s brother Esau. So related were the Edomites and Horites by proximity that Mount Seir was the geographical name for the Edomites’ territory. Note that the sons of Seir are listed in the same chapter as the genealogy of Esau’s family (Genesis 36). Job’s friend Eliphaz the Temanite was clearly an Edomite. Another Eliphaz was the firstborn of Esau, and Teman was *his* firstborn son, being the first listed chief of Edom (verses 4, 11, 15).

Teman is often reckoned to have been a city or district in Edom (see Jeremiah 49:7; Ezekiel 25:13; Amos 1:12; Obadiah 8-9). As *Expositor's* notes, "The site may be the same as the Arabian town of Tema mentioned in Babylonian sources" (and in Jeremiah 25:23). Eliphaz's identity as a Temanite dates the story of Job to at least a few generations after Jacob and Esau—most likely to when the Israelites were in Egypt (since, as we've seen, it appears to have been written prior to Israel becoming a nation).

Another of Job's friends, Bildad (mentioned above), is referred to as a Shuhite. The Shuhites were apparently descendants of Shuah, a son of Abraham by his last wife Keturah (see Genesis 25:1-2). Thus the Shuhites were closely related to the Midianites (see verses 2, 4) and to the Arabian peoples of Sheba and Dedan (verse 3). Indeed, Jeremiah 25:23 seems to place Dedan in proximity to Tema. Yet "there is a land of Suhu on the Middle Euphrates mentioned in Assyrian records" (*Expositor's*). So it is quite possible that the Shuhites stretched from northern Arabia up to the Euphrates. Indeed, as noted in the Bible Reading Program's comments on Obadiah, the Edomites appear to have stretched over this whole region. And Uz could have been anywhere in this expanse.

The land and people of Job's third friend, Zophar the Naamathite, are not known, except that Naamah was a fairly common name. But another major character in the book, the young man Elihu, is described as being the son of Barachel the Buzite. Buz was the brother of Huz, both sons of Abraham's brother Nahor (Genesis 22:20-21). Furthermore, in Jeremiah 25:23, Buz is mentioned in conjunction with Tema and Dedan. All of this helps to substantiate the conclusion that the book of Job was set among Abraham's non-Israelite descendants and related family a few generations after Jacob and Esau—again, probably while the Israelites were in Egypt. And it helps us to locate, at least generally, where the story took place.

Building on what we have already seen, *Halley's Bible Handbook* says regarding the setting of the book: "The land of Uz (1:1) is thought to have been along the border between Palestine and Arabia, extending from Edom northerly and easterly toward the Euphrates river, skirting the caravan route between Babylon and Egypt. The particular section of the land of Uz which tradition has called the home of Job was Hauran, a region east of the Sea of Galilee, noted for its fertility of soil and its grain, once thickly populated, now dotted with the ruins of three hundred cities...."

"The Septuagint, in a postscript, following ancient tradition, identified Job with Jobab, the second king of Edom (Genesis 36:33). Names and places mentioned in the book seem to give it a setting among the descendants of Esau.... If this is correct, and if Hauran was Job's home, it would indicate that the early kings of Edom may, at times, have migrated from the rock cliffs of Edom northward to the more fertile plains of Hauran. At any rate the book has the atmosphere of very primitive times, and seems to have its setting among the early tribes descended from Abraham, along the northern border of Arabia, about contemporary with Israel's sojourn in Egypt."

King Jobab, whose name relates to the aforementioned second-millennium-B.C. name *Ayyabum* (as an m sound is a nasal b), was the son of Zerah of the Edomite city of Bozrah—this Zerah likely being the same as Chief Zerah, a grandson of Esau (Genesis 36:17). The early kings of Edom, as listed in verses 31-39, apparently did not hold hereditary office and so were probably elected for life terms. It is reasonable to suppose that Job was such a king considering his vast wealth and his distinction of being the greatest man in the East. In fact, in Job 29 he seems to portray himself as a king.

As descendants of Abraham and Isaac, many of the Edomites probably continued to worship the true God in this early period—helping to explain the religious understanding of Job and his friends.

We will consider the themes and issues of the book as we progress through it, summing up the book's great lessons at the end.

God Allows Job to Suffer at Satan's Hand (Job 1–2)

February 21-22

As the book opens we encounter Job, whom God declares blameless and upright, fearing God and shunning evil (1:1, 8). This does not mean that Job was perfect—that he never sinned in any way. As Romans 3:23 tells us, all human beings have sinned—except for Jesus Christ, that is. As *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* explains: "That Job was 'blameless' (*tam*) and 'upright' (*yasar*) should not be construed to imply he was [utterly] sinless (cf. 13:26; 14:16-17). The former, from the root 'be complete' (*tmm*), usually refers to a person's spiritual maturity and the integrity (purity) of his inner being. The latter, meaning 'straight,' 'right' (*ysr*), is used in many contexts dealing with human behavior that is in line with God's ways. Together they provided an idiomatic way to describe Job's high moral character" (note on verses 1-5).

The translation “blameless” gives the sense of being beyond reproach—that is, having no obvious sins to criticize. In the New Testament, we find that John the Baptist’s parents, Zacharias and Elizabeth, were blameless (Luke 1:6), as was the apostle Paul (Philippians 3:6). Indeed, all elders and deacons in the Church are expected to be blameless (1 Timothy 3:2, 10; Titus 1:6-7). In Job’s case, it seems clear that it was difficult to find any specific transgressions of God’s law of which to accuse him.

Job 1:6 tells us of a remarkable event—the “sons of God” coming to present themselves before the Lord. As the book later says that the “sons of God” were present at the creation of the earth (38:6-7)-, it is clear that the reference is to the angels—God’s “sons” by virtue of His having created them. Even more remarkable on this occasion is that Satan comes among the angels appearing before God, leading to a dialogue between God and Satan. Many believe this event occurred in God’s heavenly court. Yet it seems highly unlikely that God the Father would allow Satan to be in His direct presence and defile His celestial throne room. Indeed, nothing abominable or profane is permitted to enter the holy city of God, the New Jerusalem, that now waits in heaven (Revelation 21:27). God cast Satan down from heaven prior to man’s creation and will later do so again at the end of the age in response to a last demonic assault. Why would the Father grant Satan casual access to heaven in between? In a related vein, some think Satan’s constant accusation of God’s people before God in Revelation 12:10 occurs in heaven. However, we should consider that whenever God’s people pray to Him they are coming before His throne (see Hebrews 4:16). Surely Satan’s words too, though spoken on earth, are heard before God the Father in heaven. Yet is that what was happening in the book of Job?

In considering the matter, it is nowhere specified that God in Job 1 was God the Father or that the Lord in this chapter was in heaven at all. It seems much more likely that the Lord here in the book of Job, who later spoke to Job, was God the Word (see John 1:1-3), the One who would become Jesus Christ (verse 14). The preincarnate Christ walked on the earth in patriarchal times. Recall that He was the Lord who walked and talked with Abraham while in the company of angels (see Genesis 18). God, as we know from other passages, has angels walking about on the earth who report back to Him. And consider that Ezekiel 1 and 10 portray the preincarnate Jesus in possession of a portable throne on which to travel about the world. With that in mind, it should be easier to imagine reconnoitering angels appearing before the preincarnate Christ somewhere *on the earth* and then Satan—whom God has allowed to remain as the ruler of this world for the time being—coming upon this gathering.

The Lord mentions the righteous life of Job to Satan, who is quick to argue that God has essentially “bought” Job’s loyalty through protecting and blessing him (Job 1:8-11). Take away the hedge of protection, Satan argues, and Job will “curse” God. We should note that, oddly enough, the word for the verb “curse” used throughout this passage (verses 5, 11; 2:5, 9), *barak*, normally actually means “bless.” Gleason Archer’s *New International Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* offers this possible explanation: “The verb *berak* means ‘say goodbye to’ in Genesis 24:60; [31:55]; 47:10; Joshua 22:6; 2 Samuel 13:25; and 1 Kings 8:66, generally with the connotation of invoking a parting blessing on the person taking his leave. From this usage we may surmise that an insolent sinner might say goodbye to God Himself, with the intention of dismissing Him from his mind and conscience, of totally abandoning Him.... [Commentator] Delitzsch (Keil and Delitzsch, Job, 2:51) calls this use of *berak* an antiphrastic euphemism. He feels that in Job 2:9 it clearly means...‘say goodbye to’...as a benedictory salutation at parting. But in his general handling of these negative usages, he prefers to render it ‘dismiss God from one’s heart’ (ibid., 2:49)” (p. 237).

Surprisingly, God responds to Satan’s challenge by putting Job’s possessions and family in the destroyer’s power. Yet note that God does not at this time permit Satan to do Job any bodily harm (verse 12). This demonstrates that God has total power over what Satan is permitted to do. While this fact should provide us with comfort, for many it is extremely disturbing that God would allow Satan to hurt Job in any way, especially given the great loss of family he suffers.

Verses 16 and 19 apparently speak of lightning and a destructive tornado respectively, showing that weather calamities can be acts of Satan. Yet these events were by the express permission of God. Indeed, God later acknowledges this, saying to Satan: “...You incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause” (2:3). This may shockingly appear to say that there was no reason at all for what God allowed to befall Job—and that God can be prodded into doing things contrary to His will. But this is not what God is saying. He is simply saying that Satan presented no reason for any punitive action against this man. Moreover, the fact that Satan was provocative does not mean that this is what motivated God to act.

Indeed, God initiated the discussion with Satan over Job—surely knowing what Satan’s response would be.

Job 1:18-19 seems to say that Job lost all his children, though 19:17 may indicate that at least two of them were not in attendance at the ill-fated banquet and therefore survived. In any case, Job’s loss of children and his wealth in a single day is difficult to fathom. Yet his reaction to it is stunning. Though he grieved deeply, Job’s response was one of humbly worshipping God, acknowledging God’s sovereignty over all circumstances (1:20-21). This is truly amazing considering that Job did not have the special knowledge the reader of the account has regarding the discussion between God and Satan. Despite the horror of what had happened, and the seeming abandonment by God that he must have felt, he did not sin (verse 22). Instead, God says that he held fast to his “integrity” (2:3), the Hebrew word here having the same root as the word for “blameless” in chapter 1. In fact, “when Job said, ‘May the name of the LORD be *praised*’ (v. 21), he was using...the same word that Satan used in v. 11 as an euphemism with the opposite meaning. The play on the root *brk* (‘bless’) is forceful. It stresses how the Accuser is foiled at this point. Instead of cursing God to his face, Job praised him” (*Expositor’s*, note on verses 20-22).

Once again, Satan comes upon an angelic presentation before God and God presents him with Job’s unswerving devotion. This time Satan presses the issue by saying that if God will remove His protection and allow him to attack Job’s physical health, Job will reject God as he had predicted. God then allows the devil to cross that line. But, demonstrating his power and authority over Satan, He still imposes a limit—Satan is not allowed to kill Job. Yet what Satan *is* allowed to do—afflict Job with painful boils from head to toe—was no doubt extremely and unrelentingly agonizing. And on top of the psychological pain of losing his family, it must have been all the more excruciating.

Job’s wife urges him to “curse God and die!” (verse 9). Many today imagine her as an impious, unsympathetic, bitter nag or even that she wanted to be rid of Job, thinking the loss of their children must have been his fault—that he had done something to deserve punishment from God. But it seems more likely that Job’s wife, having been so close to him and witnessing his unceasing devotion to God even now, would have perceived him just as God described him—as blameless. We should consider that besides losing her family, she was now watching her husband suffer intolerable pain and anguish. It was no doubt difficult for her to understand why God would allow her faithful husband to be stricken. Indeed, it is difficult for most people *today* to understand it! She may well have been quite angry with God. Moreover, she perhaps said what she did thinking that Job’s illness was terminal anyway and that he could with just a few words find immediate relief from his suffering. This great man, however, remarks on the foolishness of such a course and remains persistent in his faithfulness (verse 10).

Lastly in chapter 2, we see the coming of Job’s three friends Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar (verse 11). It was evidently months before they got the news, arranged to meet and at last arrived (compare 7:3). Perhaps their initial intent was simply to go through a typical proper mourning ritual. But what they found made them aghast. It is evident that they cared for Job because they wept and remained close to him in silence for an entire week (2:12-13)—probably deeming it inappropriate to speak before Job himself spoke. Yet as we will see, these men will soon fail miserably in their role as Job’s comforters, even wrongly accusing him of sin.

Finally, in looking at Job 1–2, people reasonably wonder why, if Job was such a devoted saint, God would allow Satan to harm him. The impression many have is that there was some kind of contest or one-upmanship going on between God and Satan—and that Job was just a pawn in this frivolous, heartless game. Indeed, many reject the story as fictitious for this reason, unable to accept that a loving God would ever hand his faithful servants over to Satan’s abuses. But the perspective of Job as a pawn in some inane spiritual contest is totally off base. While the events of these chapters were probably intended to demonstrate God’s sovereignty over Satan, we should note that the defeated enemy drops out of the account at this point—yet Job’s suffering goes on. As we will see at the end of the book, Job, despite his upright character, still needed to grow spiritually and come to really know God. That being said, we should recognize that there is indeed an unwitting pawn in the story—Satan the devil. God, knowing Satan’s nature and temperament, provokes him into taking action against Job—not to show Job’s steadfastness off to His adversary but for the ultimate purpose of perfecting Job’s character, making him an even better person than he was in preparation for a future in God’s Kingdom.

“May the Day Perish on Which I Was Born” (Job 3)**February 23-24**

A week after his friends arrive, when Job at last speaks, he is no longer the composed, almost stoic figure of the previous chapter. He pours out his heart in a flood of emotion, wishing he had never been born or that he had died at birth. Some might argue that Job’s pious integrity was based merely on personal advantage after all—that his faith and resolve were quickly overthrown. But that is much too hard of an evaluation. Recall that Job was evidently scraping at his unbearable sores and mulling over his plight for months at this point (see 7:3). People in agony and torment often cry out and say things they don’t fully mean.

The danger for Job here is in the possibility of bitterness and despair overwhelming his thinking altogether. As *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* notes on this chapter: “In chapter 3 Job established an attitude that largely colored all that he said in the succeeding chapters. In all his many words of despair, nowhere would he come closer to cursing God to his face (2:5) than here in chapter 3. By cursing the day of his birth, he was questioning the sovereign wisdom of his Creator [and, it should be added, implying that there was no worthwhile value in having lived as a servant of God]. At this point the drama is intense, for the Accuser whom we shall never see again seems to have triumphed. Whether he has or not will be determined by what follows.”

In verse 8, Job even expresses the wish that those “who curse the day”—perhaps meaning professional cursers like the false prophet Balaam (see Numbers 22–24)—had aimed their hexes at his date of birth. He refers to these cursers also as “those who are ready to arouse Leviathan.” Leviathan was understood to be a monster or dragon of the deep. Perhaps the idea was that these cursers would call forth Leviathan to bring forth a deluge from the sea to cause utter calamity, in this case against his birthday. Such a statement from Job would not necessarily mean that he believed these cursers had such power. Rather, he could merely have been lamenting: *If only they could have...and if only they did*. Yet we should consider that Leviathan, as we will later see in our reading of chapter 41, may on some level be a figurative description of Satan. If that was in Job’s thinking, then perhaps he knew that the cursers did have access to real spiritual power—that of the devil—to work dark magic and decree hexes. The irony here would be immense: *If only the devil had killed me...*

The irony is even greater near the end of the chapter. Job, longing for death to end his suffering (verses 20-23), perceived that it was God’s protective hedge that kept at bay the death for which he longed (see verse 23). How true this was! Note here that Job was in no way contemplating suicide. As much as he wanted to die, he realized that life and death were within God’s purview alone (see also 7:15-21; 10:18-22). Indeed, we should observe that in all Job said, he did not reject God or God’s laws.

In 3:25, Job surprisingly reveals that he has lived in fear of what has befallen him. *The Bible Reader’s Companion* suggests in its note on this verse: “This may be the key to the reason God permitted Job’s suffering. Job fears God and tries to serve Him. Yet he also fears the future. Perhaps through his experience Job will find a deeper faith, one that frees him from terror of the future and permits a deeper love of God.”

Finally, in ending his opening speech with the words, “I have no rest, for trouble comes” (verse 26), Job seems to recognize that the coming of his friends brings fresh turmoil and discomfort. It is likely that he well knew that his friends would view his suffering as evidence of sin and therefore hypocrisy. This, then, gives the starting point to the great controversy of the book that follows.

“Who Ever Perished Being Innocent?” (Job 4–5)**February 25-26**

Among Job’s friends, Eliphaz the Temanite speaks first, showing him probably to be the oldest and likely reckoned as the wisest. As we will see, Eliphaz is the kindest of the three in his remarks to Job. This, however, is not to say that his remarks are kind. He begins by saying that Job, a counselor and comforter to others, is not able to be bolstered by his own typical consolation (4:1-6). We then see that Eliphaz is convinced that God would not punish the truly righteous or sustain the wicked, and that he believes Job must have sinned to be deserving of such calamitous experiences.

The “lions” of verse 10 are figuratively the wicked—though whether this is a statement about the wicked in general or one intended to directly identify Job is not clear. Of course, even if generalized, Job and his family seem to be at least indirectly likened to the decimated pride of lions here. Indeed, this begins to exemplify the whole problem with Job’s friends, as we will see. We later are told that Job’s three friends have not spoken what is right concerning God (Job 42:7-8). While many of the ideas they

express are true in a general sense, these concepts do not apply universally—and they did not apply in Job’s case, as God declared him blameless and upright.

To bolster his case, Eliphaz remarkably points to some sort of night vision or dream wherein a spirit communicated with him (4:12-17). Whether this was a made-up story, his imagination or a real encounter—be it with God, a heavenly angel or a demonic imposter—we have no way of knowing. The statement of verse 17 has traditionally been translated as asking if a mortal man can be more righteous and purer than God. However, there would hardly seem to be a question about that. “Many grammarians...render it ‘Can a mortal be found righteous in the presence of God?’” (*Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, note on verses 12-21; compare NRSV). The point would be that Job was certainly guilty of some sin. While this idea was true on the face of it—and is even part of what Job comes to understand more fully at the end of the book—Eliphaz’s application of this truth with respect to Job was wrong, as he was trying to prove that Job’s suffering was directly related to some particular sin or sins he had committed.

Eliphaz’s advice in 5:8—that Job should turn to God for help—was probably rather condescending. Given even the little we know of Job from the narrative so far, we would have to assume that he was a praying person. Surely Eliphaz, an actual companion of this righteous man, knew this too. “How strange to assume that Job hasn’t sought God. The advice to ‘just pray about it’ must seem terribly trite to someone who has been pouring out his heart to God in utter anguish” (*Bible Reader’s Companion*, note on verse 8).

Interestingly, the apostle Paul quoted the words of Eliphaz in Job 5:13—about God catching the wise in their own craftiness—as authoritative Scripture, introducing them with the phrase “It is written” (1 Corinthians 3:19). “This serves as a reminder,” notes Gleason Archer in the *New International Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, “that many of the general principles the comforters brought up in their dialogue with Job were quite true in themselves, even though they may not have been appropriate to Job’s situation, and may by inference have been grossly unfair to him. But we should remember that Job himself declared to them, ‘Who does not know such things as these?’ (12:3)—i.e., those religious platitudes that they had been preaching to him” (p. 396). *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* suggests that all of Eliphaz’s words in Job 5:9-16 (including verse 13, quoted by Paul) constitute a creedal hymn. Indeed, these words may have been part of a psalm already extant within Abraham’s family that Eliphaz himself was just quoting.

Eliphaz finishes out his first speech with adages about God ultimately delivering those who repent when chastened by Him. The “covenant with the stones of the field” in verse 23 is probably related to Psalm 91:12, where God speaks of keeping His servant’s foot from dashing against a stone. Once more, the sentiments here are true when applied generally. But Eliphaz was misapplying them—not just in perceiving Job as having sinned to deserve punishment but in the heartless, tactless proclamation of these truths to one who needed comfort. Eliphaz says, for instance, that as part of the results of accepting God’s discipline, “You will know that your children will be many” (Job 5:25, NIV)—thoughtless of the awful fact that Job’s children were dead.

This should serve as a lesson to us of what not to do when people are deeply hurting. Job’s friends were at their best when they wept for him and kept quiet. It’s when they opened their mouths and started “preaching” at him—with terribly wrong assumptions moreover—that they went off course. We should never approach others suffering loss of loved ones or terminal illness and start in on them with what they should do to prevent such problems or how to get straightened out.

Eliphaz’s patronizing attitude in verse 27 made the situation all the worse—and totally misrepresented God. As *The Bible Reader’s Companion* notes: “Eliphaz has neatly packaged his God as one who must act according to his understanding. After all, if the innocent never perish, and if God hears their appeals, all Job has to do is pray and be healed! Eliphaz never stops to think how presumptuous it is to limit God by his own fallible reasoning. How foolish are the many Eliphazes among us, whose assurances that ‘if you only have enough faith you’ll be healed’ are just as superficial, harmful, and wrong.”

Job Pleads for Comfort (Job 6–7)

February 27-28

Job begins his response with an admission that, due to his severe circumstances, his words have been rash (6:3). It seems that his point here is to inform his friends that they should not pick over everything he says, as much of it is just anguish and venting.

Eliphaz, we may recall, had told Job to turn to God (5:8). Yet Job had no doubt spent much time in prayer. By this point, however, Job has come to regard his situation as one of being pierced through with poison arrows from God. Thus, relief did not seem to immediately lie in that direction (6:4). Instead, he saw a need for relief and comfort from his friends.

In verse 5 Job pointed out that donkeys and oxen cried out when they were hungry. He was, by analogy, saying that he himself was crying out because he was in need of nourishment—the nourishment in his case being the relief and comfort he sought. Yet the tasteless “food” that Eliphaz had thus far provided turned Job’s stomach (verses 6-7).

In verses 8-9 Job again wishes for God to bring him the sure relief of death. Verse 10, in which the translation is disputed, seems to be saying that if he died right now, Job would still find comfort beyond death because he did not live apart from God’s words in his life. The implicit concern, though, is that if his present circumstances continue, he may indeed reject God and lose his future reward. For how, he wonders, can he go on (verses 11-13).

In verse 14, Job says that a suffering person’s friends should treat him kindly even when that friend turns from God. That is, while it might look like there is a pressing need to “save” a suffering sinner by preaching to him and warning him, the more immediate need is actually for compassion. This does not mean there is no place for spiritual advice. But it must come with proper tact and timing—and wisdom.

Job likens his companions to desert wadis that look promising as sources of water from afar but evoke great disappointment when they are found dried up (verses 15-21). He had not asked them for some great thing like a ransom or military help to rescue him (verses 22-23). All he was asking for was simple human kindness. The arguments he had heard thus far were not only worthless to him, but accusatory and unjust (verses 24-30)—and not at all what he needed right now.

In chapter 7, Job sinks back into lamenting his condition. He views himself like a weary laborer in drudgery and toil beneath the heat of the sun looking for shade or the end of the workday (verses 1-2). Yet the end of the day, when night comes, is no relief to him at all as he struggles with the unceasing agony of his illness, which he has suffered with for months (verses 3-5).

Job perceives his days as running out fast. And in the time he has left, he wants some answers from God (verses 6-11). Why, he prays, are You doing this to me? What have I done to deserve this? (verses 12-20). Why, he asks, won’t You forgive me? It looks like You are going to let me die unrepentant without showing me what I need to repent of—so that I will be lost forever (verse 21).

As *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* notes regarding the dispute of chapters 3–27, “Job repeatedly struggles over God’s justice and his own vindication.” This will get worse as we go along. How is it then that God will later proclaim Job right and his friends wrong? The commentary continues: “A significant difference between their speeches comes from a difference in relationship with God. Job is determined to be absolutely honest with God. Job tells God everything, every tear and every doubt. They tell God nothing. They only talk about God, never to him. This should be kept in mind as we become impatient with Job. We should also keep in mind that despite all the hair-raising things Job will say, he never asks for restoration. His main concern is about his relationship with God, and that is why he puts so much stress on vindication. Without vindication all that he is suffering is proof God is his enemy. So when Job calls God his enemy, the reader must remember these are words of poetic passion used analogically as the total context proves.”

Job was not penning a theological treatise in what he was saying. Rather, he was pouring out his heart in a flood of emotion. And he was pouring it out in the right direction. For if one is going to complain (7:11), God is the proper “complaint department,” as He is the One who has the power to resolve any and all complaints. What is most remarkable about Job is that despite the fact that he sees his grief and suffering as coming from God, he is nevertheless determined to “hang in there” with God. Hoping when there is no hope. Believing beyond seeing.

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