

## **THE SUFFERING SERVANT JOB**

### ***I.***

#### ***Introduction***

In the very beginning of human existence, there was no suffering, for everything that God created was created good. It was the world without death, illness, pain, grief, sorrow, disappointment, mockery, persecution and all kinds of evil. However, human sins corrupted the good world God created and we all face the unpleasant consequences of sins committed by other people as well as by ourselves. The list of the unpleasant consequences of sins is long. All of them can be summed up under one word “suffering”.

Suffering is probably the first global problem felt urgently by mankind, for people throughout all history, in any part of the world, of every culture, religion, philosophy, of any development, have been struggling with suffering. People have been trying to find answers to their questions: “Why am I suffering?” and “What can be done about my suffering?”

As the suffering effects our spiritual and mental capacity, it is not a coincidence that different human religions and philosophies focusing on spiritual and mental needs have been trying to find answers and a solution to the problem of suffering. This has been going on for thousands of years and this is still going on even today. The fact is that no human religion or philosophy was ever able to give sufficient answers and a solution to the problem of human suffering. The only One who is able to do it and who proved that He is able to do it, is our Creator, our God.

The book of Job, is the book that demonstrates the ancient human struggle with suffering and the failure of human efforts to find answers and a solution to the suffering. At the same time God shows us in the Book of Job the only basis upon which problem of suffering can be addressed. Therefore let's consider Book of Job.

### ***II.***

#### ***The suffering Job***

#### ***What do we know about Job?***

First, let's consider the man Job. What do we know about Job? Job was a real character that lived several thousands of years ago. I believe it based on the way the book of Job portrays him as blameless and upright man living in the land of Uz, who feared God, and turned away from evil. (Job 1:1). Some people do not believe that Job ever existed and they think that he is just a made up parabolic figure personifying human afflictions and sorrows in the Hebrew poem that we call the Book of Job.

However, if Job never existed, why did God put fictitious Job into the same group with real persons - Noah and Daniel - and give all three of them as examples of righteousness. - [Ezekiel 14:12-20](#). If Job never existed, why did God give us Job as an example of perseverance? - [James 5:11](#). How could Job be an example relevant for us, if he never existed? As we can see testimony of Job is not only in the book of Job. In all books, where it occurs it is consistent with the portrayal of Job as a historical character who really lived, feared God and turned away from evil.

We do not have detailed information about Job's origin, land or time period he lived in, but rather slight hints. In v. 3 we can read that Job was the greatest man of all the people of the east. The Hebrew word translated as east can also mean antiquity – ancient time. In v. 5 we can read that Job

offered burnt offerings to God for possible sins of his sons, which points to the time of family religion, when father was the head of his family and priest to God. This family religion preceded national religion that was given by God through Moses to physical nation of Israel and was followed by universal religion given by God through Jesus to people of every nation that would obey gospel (universal religion).

Human characters in the book of Job repeatedly present certain general spiritual truths that are compatible with the will of God revealed in the Bible through the inspired writers beginning with Moses (Torah, or Five books of Moses) and ending with John (Revelation). - Job 8:3, 5-7 This shows that their original source was with the true God, not with false religions which are almost as old as the mankind. However every general spiritual truth must be correctly interpreted and applied.

Since God in the end of the Book of Job directly reprimanded erring Job and his friends, it shows that Job lived in the time period when God spoke directly to the individual humans. The same form of communication was used by God when He reprimanded Cain or Sarah. Once God gave the written Law through Moses, it became the standard for what is good and evil for all people who wanted to worship the true God. Beginning from Book of Joshua we can read: "it is written..." - Joshua 8:31

Job and his friends in their speeches in the Book of Job never referred to God's written Word as the authority for their arguments. They referred either to their own experience (Eliphaz – Job 4:8-9; Job – Job 13:1-2), or to other people's experience (Bildad – Job 8:8; Eliphaz – Job 15:16-19), or to general revelation of God through His creation (Job – Job 12:7-10), or to general experience of mankind (Sophar 20:4-5; Job – Job 21:6-15), or to God speaking to people through a dream, a vision (Elihu – Job 33:14-17). Job also referred to God's spoken word (Job 23:12, 28:28). Job's friends were trying to answer suffering and give a solution to it based upon conclusions they made from their own experience as well as of experience of other people. - Job 20:4-5 However Job used the same logic, i.e. the same human experience to disprove the conclusions of his friends. - Job 21:6-15

Further, in the book of Job we can read about Chaldeans (Job 1:7), Sabeans (Job 1:15) or Cush, which is Ethiopia (Job 28:19) which are clear signs that Job lived after the flood, for there is a number of verses mentioning Chaldeans, Sabeans and Ethiopia throughout the Bible. Job himself lived in the land of Uz, not in Canaan or Egypt, which may indicate that he was not a Jacob's descendant, or Hebrew. For that reason, some people believe that he was not a Hebrew, but an Edomite, or descendant of Esau (Genesis 36:33) for Edomites lived in the land of Seir (Genesis 32:3) or Uz (Lamentation 4:21, Deuteronomy 2:12,22). Further, one of Job's friends Eliphaz was apparently the descendant of Esau (Genesis 36:11).

All the above indicates that Job lived in the ancient time that we call patriarchal period, sometime after the birth of Abraham and before the law was given through Moses. It is possible that he was not a Hebrew.

### ***III. What was Job's situation?***

Now, what was Job's situation. Job is a world wide renown sufferer afflicted apparently without any reason on his part by the worst afflictions. They robbed the lives of his 10 children, a number of servants, health, wealth, good reputation, estranged him his wife, kin, fellow-citizens, those whom he helped. It made him an object of scorn (Job 16:20). People despised him (Job 19:18) and accused him of sins (Job 22:5-10). He was afflicted with a painful disease. Until today the expression "Job's tidings"

in Czech language is an expression used to mark unexpected tragic or unpleasant event or bad news in general.

Now, let's look at Job's reaction to the bad things that happened to him. - Job 1:20-22, 2:10 Job received the bad news humbly, he suffered for months silently and patiently without blaming God for his situation and without turning away from Him, despite that in his mind was a big question mark. "Why?" This shows how great faith Job had in God, how humble and patient man he was, although he did not understand the reason for his suffering. This is the example for us of how we should approach our own suffering, especially the suffering that we do not understand why it befell us.

The reason Job did not understand his situation was that he knew that God punishes sinners, but he also knew that he was living a godly life. Throughout the book, Job self-examines himself. He is aware that no one is without sin, yet he does not find anything so horrendous on his behaviour that would be worthy of such disasters which affected him and he wanted to understand God's dealing with him. - Job 6:30, 9:21, 16:16-17 The fact that Job did not understand God's ways nor did he know the answer to his question why he suffered, troubled and frustrated Job. - Job 24:1, 30:20, 27

Now, 3 friends of Job, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar who learned about his calamities came to visit him to give him their sympathy. They were so terrified at the sight of him, that they wept, tore their robes and sprinkle dust on their heads. They sat with him on the ground for seven days and nights in silence, for they saw that his suffering was very great. (Job 2:12-13)

After seven days and nights of silence, Job poured out his frustration to his friends and wished to die. (Job 3:20-26). Then followed an exchange of speeches between his friends and Job. Unlike Job, who after afflictions that followed his godly life, didn't understand God's ways, to Job's friends everything seemed to be crystal clear: God punishes the sinners. The answer to your suffering Job is that you must have sinned, for God has punished you. They also had solution to Job problem. Repent Job! Turn back to God and he will restore you. These are the underlining messages of speeches of Job's friends, although probably because of the tact they did not always said it openly. - Job 5:17 But Job understood what they ment and he answered openly: I am blameless! - Job 6:29 In the minds of his friends, such was impossible and they insisted on their counsel (Job 8:5-7). As the time went on and there was no confession of sins on the part of Job, on the contrary he insisted upon his righteousness (Job 9:21), the patience of his friends was running out. They begun to treat him harshly, accusing him of alleged sins and commenting on his claimed righteousness with sarcasm. - Job 15:1-6, 22:5-10 They reacted to Job just like everyone else and only added to his grief. - Job 19:1-3

What they actually did was they used for absolute truth general principles of how God deals with the righteous and sinners: "Are you blessed with physical blessings? Then you must be righteous and God is blessing you! Are you afflicted? Then you must be a sinner and God is punishing you!" This is a simplistic and very dangerous view of the world, that Job's friends were trying to impress on Job. They neither gave him an answer to his suffering, nor gave him their sympathy, which was the purpose of their visit.

Job refuted their arguments for no one is without sin, the world is full of sinners who do not care for God and yet they prosper on the earth (Job 12:6-7) and as for him, he did fear God (Job 12:4).

Further, Job saw that human wisdom could not give the answer to his suffering, nor provide a solution to it. Knowing of his fearing God and living godly life, he put all his hopes in God alone, who is the Redeemer of righteous and Judge of unrighteous. - Job 19:25-29

Job had confidence that God would save him, because he kept God's commandments and he was determined to do so as long as he lived regardless of the suffering. To do the will of God is the wisdom in the sight of God. - Job 23:10-12, 27:2-6, 28:28

In the end of the book God spoke and showed Job how limited was his understanding of God's ways when Job had spoken about God's dealings with him and Job repented of his speaking things he did not understand. - Job 38:1-6, 40:6-14, 42:1-6

#### ***IV.***

#### ***Conclusions, lessons and applications for us***

The suffering of Job could not be explained and understood based on human knowledge and wisdom. Job as well as his friends thought that it was God who gave him all the afflictions, while in reality it was Satan. Job was troubled in his mind as to why God acted in such a manner to him, while Job's friends troubled Job's mind with false reasoning concerning God punishing him for his sins. They all lacked the proper understanding yet, it was Job, who found favor with God, not his friends, because Job despite of his immense suffering did the right thing by putting his trust in God as his Savior. His friends who assumed they knew God's ways and who themselves were at ease, condemned their suffering friend as a sinner, who deserved all the afflictions. Thus they judged Job unjustly on false premises, failed to show him compassion, give him comfort and made themselves look righteous.

The manifestation of Almighty God silenced all of them and was sufficient to overcome all Job's questions concerning his suffering. In the Book of Job we actually do not read that God explained to Job why he was suffering. It is true that sometimes we can read in Bible when God's prophets were predicting judgement and suffering against different individuals or whole nations because of their sins, but this is not the only reason, why people suffer in their lives. God in His Word does not provide a detailed explanation of the subject of suffering. For instance in the Book of Job it is possible to see struggle of demonic power against God on the background of Job's suffering. Will he remain as faithful to God at the time of his suffering as he was at the time of his ease?

Suffering servant Job is a foreshadowing of the greatest sufferer in human history, Jesus Christ. Unlike Job, Jesus did not commit any sin. Unlike Job, Jesus had divine and human nature. Yet he suffered humiliation, torments and death on the cross from the hands of his own creations, in order that he could offer us eternal life. If one is puzzled over the suffering of God's faithful servant Job, what is to be said about the suffering of God? I mean the suffering of the Father seeing His Son dying on the cross and the suffering of the innocent Son on the cross for our sins. It is beyond our comprehension! And it shows us how terrible is sin in the sight of God, how great is His justice that requires the punishment of sin and how even greater is his love and mercy for us when He gave the life of His Son Jesus Christ for our sins.

Many times things happen to us that cause us to suffer. The reason may not be clear to us and we may never find it out during this life on the earth. It will not help to trouble our mind with question "Why?" if we know that we have lived a godly life. We need to take the example of Job and not let suffering and lack of understanding shake our faith and trust in God. God is the only One who knows all the answers to all our sufferings. His ultimate remedy for all our sufferings is Jesus' sacrifice on the cross that gives us hope of eternal life with God in His Heavenly Kingdom, where there is no suffering.

**V.**  
***Invitation***

The only way one can benefit from Jesus' sacrifice and obtain the ultimate remedy to his/her suffering is by obeying the gospel, becoming a Christian, and living a Christian life. Are you a Christian? Have you tried God's answer to life and its problems? Do you have anxiety and worry that causes you to suffer? Is it not the time to put all of this in the hands of a caring and loving God?

Prague July 5, 2008  
Last revision June 27, 2010

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