

WHY JOB DIED HAPPY

Job 19:25-27

INTRODUCTION:

I. Job give us an account of tragedy and woe, of breastbeating, of fierce debate, of a cosmic wager lost and won - after all of that, the story of Job ends almost cozily, with Job entertaining his great-great-great grandchildren in perfect serenity.

A. That ending frustrates some folks.

1. For them, Job had been a hero, a champion of dissent against God's injustices.

2. But he caved in, he let God off the hook.

B. No amount of new prosperity could make up for the suffering Job had undergone.

1. What of the ten children who died?

2. No parent could believe for a minute that a new brood of children could erase the sorrow of the one's Job lost.

C. But let Job speak for himself.

1. This is what Job said after God's speech from the whirlwind. Job 42:3-6.

2. Evidently, God's answer satisfied Job completely.

II. On the other hand, some point to the happy ending as the final answer to disappointment with God.

A. See, they say, God delivers his people from adversity.

1. He restored Job's health and wealth, and he will do the same for us if we will trust him like Job did.

2. These readers overlook one important fact, however - Job spoke his contrite words before any of his losses had been restored.

- a. He was still sitting in a pile of rubble, naked, covered with sores, and it was in those circumstances that he learned to praise God.

B. Only one thing had changed - God had given Job a glimpse of the big picture.

1. God spectacularly answered Job's biggest question - Is anybody out there?

2. Once Job caught sight of the unseen world, all of his urgent questions faded away.

C. From God's viewpoint, Job's comfort was - however harsh it may sound - insignificant in comparison with the cosmic issues at stake.

1. The real battle ended when Job refused to give up on God, thus causing Satan to lose the Wager.

2. After that tough victory, God hastened to shower good gifts on Job.

- a. Pain? I can fix that easily.
 - b. More Children, camels and oxen? No problem.
 - c. Of course, I want you happy and wealthy and full of life!

3. But Job, you've got to understand that something far

more important than happiness was at stake here.

III. Still others find the ending irrelevant.

A. Job got a personal visit from God, and I'm happy for him, but since God hasn't visited me, how does that help me with my trials.

B. In a sense, our experience resembles Job's before God came.

1. We, too, live among clues and rumors, some of which seem to argue against a powerful, loving god.

2. We, too, must exercise faith, with no certainty.

C. Such persons seem to test God by demanding an appearance, or at least a miracle.

1. Somehow I doubt that God feels any obligation to prove himself in such a manner.

a. He did so many times in the Old Testament.

b. He did so with finality in the person of Jesus Christ.

c. How further incarnation do we demand of him.

2. In fact, I wonder in an insistent desire for a miracle doesn't betray a lack of faith, rather than an abundance of it.

a. We set conditions for God based on which we will believe.

b. We make our loyalty to God dependent on whether he reveals himself to us one more time in the seen world..

D. If we demand miracles from God, we prepare the way for a permanent state of disappointment.

1. True faith does not so much attempt to manipulate God to do our will, as it seeks to position itself to do God's will.

2. Hebrews 11 pointedly notes that the giants of faith did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. Heb. 11:39.

3. We humans call the seen world the "real" world and the unseen world the "unreal" world, but the Scripture calls for almost the opposite.

a. Through faith, the unseen world increasingly takes shape as the real world and sets the course for how we live in the seen world.

b. Paul addressed this issue with the Corinthians: 2 Cor. 4:16-18.

BODY:

I. Perhaps the best way to view the ending of Job is to see it now as a blueprint for what will happen to us in this life, but rather as a sign of what is to come.

A. It stands as a sweet, satisfying symbol, a solution to one man's disappointment that offers us all a foretaste of the future.

1. Surely it is correct that the pleasures of Job's old age did not make up for his losses.

2. Even Job, happy and full of days, died, passing on the cycle of grief and sorrow to his survivors.

3. The worst mistake of all would be to suppose that God is

somehow content to make a few minor adjustments in this tragic, unfair world.

B. Some stake all their faith on a miracle, as if a miracle would eliminate all disappointment with God.

1. It wouldn't.

a. Even if miracles did still occur or if God just worked one special for us, it wouldn't solve our problems.

b. Something is still bad wrong with this planet.

c. For one thing, all of us die; the ultimate mortality rate is the same for atheists and believers.

C. Miracles serve as signs pointing on to the future.

1. They are appetizers which awaken a longing for something more, something permanent.

2. The happiness of Job's old age was a mere sampling of what he would enjoy after death.

3. The good news at the end of Job and the good news of the resurrection at the end of the gospels are previews of the good news at the end of Revelation.

4. We dare not lose sight of the world God wants.

II. The promise of Job 42, then, is that God will finally right the wrongs that mark our days.

A. Some sorrows, the deaths of Jobs children for instance, never heal in this life.

1. But at the end of time, that grief too will vanish for the

people of God.

2. Job will get his children back

3. If that were not so, we would be of all men most pitiable.

1 Cor. 15:19.

B. The Bible stakes God's reputation on his ability to conquer evil and restore heaven and earth to their original perfection.

1. The Bible calls us to look beyond the grim reality of history to view all of eternity and that which God prepares there for his people.

2. In any discussion of God's dealing with man, heaven is the last word, the most important word of all.

3. For the first time ever, human beings will be able to look upon God face to face.

4. In the midst of his agony, Job somehow came up with the faith to believe that "in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes.."

C. That prophecy will come true for all of God's faithful.

III. Many of us seem to have trouble even imagining a future state.

A. Our experience on earth makes it difficult for us to imagine good without a catch in it somewhere.

B. Perhaps instead of projecting ourselves into a future we can never quite grasp, we would do better to look at the unfulfilled dreams and the disappointment of the present.

1. All of us share such longings.

a. This world may be full of death, sorrow, crime, war,

pollution, and greed.

b. But inside all of us linger remnants that remind us of what the world could be like.

2. We see such longings expressed in:

a. The environmental movement, which sees that world preserved in a pristine state.

b. The peace movement, which sees a world without war.

c. Therapy groups, which try to reconnect broken strands of love and friendship.

3. All the beauty and joy we meet on earth represent only:

a. The scent of a flower we have not found;

b. The echo of a tune we have not heard;

c. News from a far country we never have visited.

C. The prophets proclaim that such sensations are not illusions or mere dreams, but advance echoes of what will come true.

1. We are given few details about that future world, only a promise that God will prove himself trustworthy.

2. When we awake in the new heaven and new earth, we will possess at last that for which we have longed.

a. Somehow, from all the bad news - incredible good news will emerge - a good without a catch in it.

b. There is a happy ending after all.

CONCLUSION:

I. For all of God's people who are trapped in pain, or in a broken home, or in economic misery, or in fear - for all those people, for all of us, heaven promises a time, far longer and more substantial than the time we spent on earth, of health, wealth, pleasure and peace.

A. If we did not believe that, there would be little reason to believe at all.

B. As Paul plainly stated, without hope, there is no hope.

II. The Bible never belittles human misery.

A. Job is 41 chapters of misery and anguish followed by one chapter of restoration.

B. It does add one key word - temporary.

1. What we feel now we will not always feel.

2. Our disappointment itself is a sign, an aching, a hunger for something better.

III. Faith is, in the end, a kind of homesickness of the soul - for a home we have never visited but have never once stopped longing for. Rev. 21:1-4.