

Job and his children

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JOB 1 GIVES the Divine view of Job, irrespective of what his three friends said about him. It is said not only that he was "perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil" (v. 1), but also that "there is none like him in the earth" (v. 8). To this we can add, 'none until the coming of the Son of God', the only one able to stand more suffering even than Job.

Many have wondered why Job was so severely tried, but maybe the reason is given in Job 3:25,26: "For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me. I was not in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I quiet; yet trouble came". He could never feel at ease or relaxed; he must have worried, "What would I be like if I lost all that the Almighty has given to me? What would I be like if I was ill and dying?". And what he had worried about came upon him.

But what about his children? He had seven sons and three daughters (1:2). There is a very telling verse that sums them up: "They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave" (21:13). Job was perhaps not aware that this was applicable to his children. We read in Job 1:4 that his sons had a feast day "every one his day", presumably their birthdays. The following scriptures seem very relevant regarding Job's children:

"Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her" (Ezek. 16:49);

"Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them!" (Isa. 5:11);

"A feast is made for laughter, and wine maketh merry" (Eccl. 10:19).

Compare the phrase "his day" with "a day" in Job 1:6, the latter being most likely the sabbath, "when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD", words repeated in 2:1. This phrase, "a day", occurs again in 1:13:

As he was mindful of God during his prosperity and not just his affliction, Job faithfully fulfilled his function as family priest. He believed in the power of a mediator and cared about the spiritual health of his family. His earnestness and conscientiousness are evidenced in that he "rose up early in the morning".

"And there was a day when his [Job's] sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house", words repeated for emphasis in verse 18.

How dare they do this when they should have been meeting with "the sons of God"! No wonder Job, after such a feast, "rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts" (1:5). They were like their mother, who told Job to "curse God, and die" (2:9). What an evil woman, telling Job to forget God after all He had done for Job! We can imagine her saying it, and Job's reply, "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?". We are told: "In all this did not Job sin with his lips" (v. 10). What a remarkable character he was!

There is a verse in Proverbs which could apply to Job's children: "He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy" (29:1). We can imagine Job reprov'ing them, as Eli did his sons (1 Sam. 2:22-25). The words of Bildad may be appropriate to Job's children as well: "If thy children have sinned against Him, and He have cast them away for their transgression . . ." (Job 8:4).

Let us be warned by the sudden destruction of Job's children while they were feasting together, for the New Testament warns us not to be overtaken by the same fate:

"For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking . . . and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Mt. 24:38,39);

"For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them" (1 Thess. 5:2,3).

David Baird, *The Education of Job*