

Christ in the Hebrew Poets
“Anticipating the Coming of Christ” (Job)

Introduction:

Today, a brand new series on the genre of Scripture known as Poetic Literature.

- First 17 books of the Old Testament (Genesis through Esther)—Historical
- Last 17 books of the Old Testament (Isaiah through Malachi)—Prophetic
- Sandwiched between—(Job—Song of Songs)—Poetic

Characteristics of Poetic Books

- Experiential vs. Historical
- Concerned with individual vs. nation
- Focus is human heart vs. Hebrew race
- Poetic (refers to form) still deal with human experiences, grapple with profound problems, and express big realities, especially the experience of the godly in the ever-changing life “under the sun.”

Time Frame of the Poetic Books

- Patriarchal period (2000 BC—Job)
- Davidic period (1000 BC—Psalms)
- Solomonic period (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs)

Kinds of Hebrew Poetry

- **Lyric Poetry** (originally accompanied by music-lyre—Psalms)
- **Didactic Poetry** (uses maxims, short pithy proverbs to communicate basic life principles (Proverbs) Ecclesiastes)
- **Dramatic Poetry** (uses dialogue to communicate its message—Job, Song of Songs)

Christ in the Hebrew Poetry

You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. John 5:39 NKJV

And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Luke 24:27 NKJV

Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me." Luke 24:44 NKJV

Norman Geisler

"Whereas the foundation laid for Christ is in the Law and preparation for Christ is in the books of History, the books of Poetry reveal the aspiration for Christ—in the hearts of the people. They aspired to a life fulfilled in Christ in both an explicit and implicit way, both consciously and unconsciously." (Geisler—A Popular Survey of the Old Testament)

Christ in Job—Anticipation of Christ's Coming (or a longing)

The Poetic Books: A Pastoral Perspective (28)—Kevin Holt

"It would be misleading to suggest that Job had an awareness of the coming of Christ and that his words were somehow prophetic. It is more accurate to say that Job reflects the anticipation of every human, and that stirs an innate hunger for a relationship with God.

Today we look at Christ in Job

About Job

- Often misunderstood and misused (patriarchal, author)
- Deals with the ever-present issue human suffering
- Every religion must provide some answers
- More specifically—righteous suffering—how can a just God allow for it?
- Job the man

Then the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?" Job 1:8 NKJV

— Satanic challenge

So Satan answered the Lord and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing? 10 Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. 11 But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!" 12 And the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person." So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord. Job 1:9-12 NKJV

— Great devastation

Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house; 14 and a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, 15 when the Sabeans raided them and took them away — indeed they have killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you!" 16 While he was still speaking, another also came and said, "The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them; and I alone have escaped to tell you!" 17 While he was still speaking, another also came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three bands, raided the camels and took them away, yes, and killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you!" 18 While he was still speaking, another also came and said, "Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, 19 and suddenly a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people, and they are dead; and I alone have escaped to tell you!" Job 1:13-19 NKJV

— Job's response

Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. 21 And he said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord." 22 In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong. Job 1:20-22 NKJV

— Second challenge

So Satan answered the Lord and said, "Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. 5 But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face!" Job 2:4-5 NKJV

— God allows

And the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your hand, but spare his life." Job 2:6 NKJV

— Suffering of Job

So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord, and struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. Job 2:7 NKJV

— His wife

Now when Job's three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, each one came from his own place — Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. For they had made an appointment together to come and mourn with him, and to comfort him. 12 And when they raised their eyes from afar, and did not recognize him, they lifted their voices and wept; and each one tore his robe and sprinkled dust on his head toward heaven. 13 So they sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his grief was very great. Job 2:11-13 NKJV

— What follows is (dialogue x 3, monologue x 3 Job/Elihu) God speeches an epilogue

Three places where a longing or anticipation for Christ is revealed

I. Job reveals the longing of humanity to be reconciled to God.

A. Context is his response to Bildad

1. Accuses Job of windy speech (8:2)
2. Saw tragedy as a result of sin

If your sons have sinned against Him, He has cast them away for their transgression. Job 8:4 NKJV

3. Says Job has forgotten God

Can the papyrus grow up without a marsh? Can the reeds flourish without water? 12 While it is yet green and not cut down, It withers before any other plant. 13 So are the paths of all who forget God; And the hope of the hypocrite shall perish. Job 8:11-13 NKJV

4. Charges Job as guilty

Behold, God will not cast away the blameless, nor will He uphold the evildoers. Job 8:20 NKJV

B. Job's response is one of exasperation

1. How can a man ever be right with God?
2. No one can stand before God and win

Then Job spoke again: 2 "Yes, I know all this is true in principle. But how can a person be declared innocent in God's sight? 3 If someone wanted to take God to court, would it be possible to answer him even once in a thousand times? 4 For God is so wise and so mighty. Who has ever challenged him successfully? 5 "Without warning, he moves the mountains, overturning them in his anger. 6 He shakes the earth from its place, and its foundations tremble. 7 If he commands it, the sun won't rise and the stars won't shine. 8 He alone has spread out the heavens and marches on the waves of the sea. Job 9:1-8 NLT

3. He recognizes that his humanity is so far removed from God's holy perfection that there is no bridging the gap

Big Question of Job (still question of humanity)

"How can a mortal man stand before a God so great and even hope to gain His favor."

If only there were someone to mediate between us, someone to bring us together, 34 someone to remove God's rod from me, so that his terror would frighten me no more. 35 Then I would speak up without fear of him, but as it now stands with me, I cannot. Job 9:33-35 NIV

C. Job longed to be reconciled to God

Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both. Job 9:33 KJV

"Daysman" betwixt us that he might lay his hand on both of us"—daysman—yakach (yay-heck)

1. Not a judge to indict
2. A mediator to bring two parties together
3. No man could do that because it involved a holy God
4. God is too dreadful for man to be approached by him

D. This was the story of the Old Covenant

1. Foreshadowed to Abraham
2. Cut covenant with Abraham

Then He said to him, "I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it." 8 And he said, "Lord God, how shall I know that I will inherit it?" 9 So He said to him, "Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." 10 Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. 11 And when the vultures came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away. 12 Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror and great darkness fell upon him. 13 Then He said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. 14 And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. 15 Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. 16 But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete." 17 And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces. Genesis 15:7-17 NKJV

E. Jesus is that Mediator—reconciled

For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus. 1 Timothy 2:5 NKJV

II. Job reveals the need of humanity to be vindicated before their enemies.

A. Comes from maybe his most impassioned words to his friends in all his monologues.

1. Begins by saying; even if he had sinned it had not affected them.

And if indeed I have erred, My error remains with me. Job 19:4 NKJV

2. Describes how brutally he had been treated

My relatives have failed, And my close friends have forgotten me. 15 Those who dwell in my house, and my maidservants, Count me as a stranger; I am an alien in their sight. 16 I call my servant, but he gives no answer; I beg him with my mouth. 17 My breath is offensive to my wife, And I am repulsive to the children of my own body. 18 Even young children despise me; I arise, and they speak against me. 19 All my close friends abhor me, And those whom I love have turned against me. Job 19:14-19 NKJV

3. Begs for pity from his friends

"Have pity on me, have pity on me, O you my friends, For the hand of God has struck me! Job 19:7 NKJV

(NOTE: They did not)

B. Job declares his faith and confidence in God

"Oh, that my words were written! Oh, that they were inscribed in a book! 24 That they were engraved on a rock With an iron pen and lead, forever! 25 For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth; 26 And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God, 27 Whom I shall see for myself, And my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me! Job 19:23-27 NKJV

1. Didn't know about Christ
2. No developed theology about the Messiah
3. Just longing and confidence in a God he believed would vindicate him

INTERESTING: He didn't know God had already been doing this behind the scenes.

C. We long to be vindicated—a promise of God

1. Enemies lies

No weapon formed against you shall prosper, And every tongue which rises against you in judgment You shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, And their righteousness is from Me," Says the Lord. Isaiah 54:17 NKJV

2. Whole armor of God

3. No condemnation

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. Romans 8:1 NKJV

Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Romans 8:33-34 NKJV

4. Will present us faultless

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, 25 To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen. Jude 24-25 NKJV

He understands us—He's our Redeemer

III. Job reveals the necessity of humanity having an intercessor.

And so it was, after the Lord had spoken these words to Job, that the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has. 8 Now therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, go to My servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and My servant Job shall pray for you. For I will accept him, lest I deal with you according to your folly; because you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has." 9 So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did as the Lord commanded them; for the Lord had accepted Job. 10 And the Lord restored Job's losses when he prayed for his friends. Indeed the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. Job 42:7-10 NKJV

A. The failure of the friends—anger of God

1. Told to make a burnt offering
2. Asks Job to intercede—amazing that he would
3. Then God would forgive

B. Job was well equipped to intercede because he himself had suffered

It is often the case that those best equipped to help those who are suffering are those who have themselves, suffered. Job, because he knew the pain of feeling alone and separated from God, was able to empathize with his friends who were now experiencing separation from God who was angry with them. Instead of harboring hatred or bitterness, Job interceded on their behalf so they could be restored.

Ravi Zacharias tells a moving story of his trip to Nanjing, China, where he spent a few hours with one of China's great evangelists, Wang Ting Tau, hearing his heroic and convicting story. Under Mao Zedong's brutal regime, he was imprisoned for his faith but recanted that faith to be released. Once free he knew he had betrayed Christ, and so with a renewed spiritual vigor and passion, he went through the streets of Beijing crying, "My name is Peter and I have betrayed my Lord." As he had hoped, he was promptly arrested again and spent nineteen years behind bars for his faith.

When he finished telling that story, Tau asked Ravi Zacharias if he could sing the guests a hymn that he had sung in prison every day. With a beaten and worn body and his nearly blind wife sitting next to him, he sang these words:

*All the way My Savior leads me
What Have I to ask beside?
Can I doubt his tender mercy
Who through life has been my guide?
Heavenly peace, divinest comfort,
Here by faith in Him to dwell!
For I know, whae'r befall me,
Jesus doeth all things well.*

As Zacharias watched, three young men knelt listening to Tau sing. When he finished, they asked him to pray for them. These robust and healthy young men were asking this worn and fragile elderly man to pray for them. He had suffered and was the perfect example of redemptive suffering, his own life touched by the Savior in his own pain. His prayer was from experience, and his prayer was with certainty that the same God who had upheld him would sustain these young men as well.

This is what Job did for his friends, and this is what Christ has done for us. The One who is "touched with the feeling our infirmities" and has been "tried in all points like as we" (Hebrews 4:15, NKJV), "lives to make intercession" for us (Hebrews 7:25, NKJV). This is the truth of Job's epic and the challenge for all of us in our experiences of suffering, "comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God" (2 Corinthians 1:4, NKJV).

Conclusion: Job points us to Christ

1. One who reconciles
2. One who vindicates
3. One who intercedes