

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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JOB 1:21-22; 2:1-10

Facing Our History, Telling Our Story Truthfully

In ignoring and lying about the history of the church, we memorialize evil, ensnare ourselves in cycles of repetition, and imperil our offspring to repeat past acts—the truth of which we never learned and taught.

The Church—indeed the world—has been in such a cycle since the 4th century, and the cycle appears to be in another period of reckoning.

What if Job were understood not as an individual or one family, but as a nation, an empire even? What if the story of the empire—as hidden as the empire might like to keep its actual experience—was forced to account for its deeds over previous centuries, through a series of cataclysmic events that halted trade, leveled cultures into the same experiences of suffering, and rendered the nation vulnerable to multiple attacks by a host of other nations?

What would the nation do? Would the nation get still before God and worship God as the author and owner of all life? Would the nation renounce idolatry, lying, lies, violence, and greed?

Robert Williams writes:

At the dawn of Renaissance Europe's discoveries in the New World and conquests of the American Indian, Europeans already enjoyed the singular advantage of possessing a systematically elaborated legal discourse on colonization. This discourse, first successfully deployed during the medieval Crusades to the Holy Land, unquestioningly asserted that normatively divergent non-Christian peoples could rightfully be conquered and their lands could lawfully be confiscated by Christian Europeans enforcing their peculiar vision of a universally binding natural law.¹

Williams summarizes that Christianity made conscientious choices, first to maraud Europe and Asia in order to recapture Jerusalem (1095–1300) then to maraud Africa, Europe, and the Americas in order to (note the new, bold, openly-articulated aspiration) to accumulate wealth (1300–present).

Job as a parable about a nation with excessive wealth sounds reasonable, defensible, and easy for modern Christians in the west to connect with *if we decide to uncover, study, and understand the truth of the history of Christianity in the world.*

Addressing Sexism in the Church

The text says Job worshiped God. May we assume that Mrs. Job also worshiped God? After worship, the passage tells us about other events that happened in God's presence. The writer tells us of a decision God made (2:1-6) and what happened next to Job and his wife (vv. 7-10).

Until the final chapter, other people seem incidental to the story, like props to help tell the story. Job's wife, children, servants, community, friends, animals, and environment all help tell a story about Job remaining faithful to God as he suffered. Scholars believe the elements of the story clearly indicate the story is a parable, although perhaps about a real family.

Job is shown to have faithfully persevered, but according to the English translators of this parable, Mrs. Job's only decision was "curse God and die." With those words, the narrator presented a one-dimensional character; the reader is left with two harsh characterizations of Mrs. Job. Clearly, Job's wife was not a faithful, persevering person, according to the English translations.

Read **Job's wife—misunderstood** by Dr. Bailey, in the *Salt & Light* participant guide (p. 59).

The text follows the biblical pattern of portraying the experience of the couple, as the experience of Job—the male—alone. In so doing, the text reflects both the pattern of diminishing and demonizing the female and theorizing about events that happened in God's presence. While the narrator does not present what could have been easily acquired from the wife of Job, the narrator goes to great lengths to present what could not be known about meetings in heaven!

As Dr. Bailey points out, the misinterpretation of the title for the adversary in order to present this creature as somehow an equal to God rather than as accountable to God explicitly distorts and conflicts with the presentation of the satan in Job. Equally, the diminishment and the demonization of the wife of Job also does not reflect the Hebrew presentation of her, leading many Bible interpreters to conclude that there is a modern commitment to this ancient pattern of the abuse of women and girls reflected in the language and structure of the book.

Learning together

Schedule a time to process the challenge of sexism in the church today. Watch "*The Land of No Men: Inside Kenya's Women-Only Village*" (<https://youtu.be/UrnmBLB-UX4>).

1. Robert A Williams, Jr, *The American Indian in Western Legal Thought: The Discourses of Conquest*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 13.

Identify the major points made by the community founder and other women of all ages in the video.

Suggestions for discernment by women and girls in your congregation:

1. Identify steps consistent with following Jesus to encourage girls and women to no longer comply with efforts to silence, diminish, demonize, and subjugate you to domination and control by other people.
2. What biblical principles and commandments will help you work together to stop behaviors that diminish,

objectify, silence, and even demonize girls and women today?

3. How can you ensure you will work together to take the steps you identify?
4. What resources do you need to explain these to the entire congregation?

Continue your discussion over meals as a group on a regular basis. Discuss your experiences in the church in which girls and women are being objectified, silenced, diminished, demonized, and otherwise controlled within the church.