

Preface

The content of this book is based on eight messages preached in a local congregation in 1986 as part of a series of messages, *Appearance and Reality*. It is neither a commentary nor an exposition on the entire Book of Job.

Understanding Job is an attempt to understand the person Job, his state and the meaning in his heart, and how he fared before, during and after the severe trials that came upon him. It is also an attempt to understand some major issues in the Book of Job and a number of difficult questions that confront the reflective reader. For example:

- Why did God allow Satan to attack Job so severely?
- Why does the Scriptures hold Job up as a very positive example for us and why did God speak favourably of him and yet also rebuke him in strong terms?
- Why did Job falter in spite of his moral and spiritual stature? Were his failures serious? Was it feasible for Job to overcome in the difficult context he was in? How could he have done so?
- Did God answer the questions that perplexed and disturbed Job? If He did not, how were Job's problems resolved? Why did God answer Job the way He did?
- Is there significant meaning in what Job went through and are there important lessons we can learn from the Book of Job?

The Book of Job is a very profound and meaningful book in the Bible. There are deep truths that God seeks to teach us, but He does so in an indirect manner. Unlike the epistles in the New Testament, in the Book of Job, God speaks through a story, a historical narrative, a true account of an episode in a person's life.

Several unusual features stand out in the Book of Job. For example:

- It offers a rare glimpse into the spiritual realm, right into the heart of spiritual warfare.
- It records conversations between God and Satan about a man, Job.
- It reveals Satan's tactics in afflicting God's children, and how God, while allowing the attacks, drew a limit to Satan's sphere of operation.
- It discloses to us that despite Job's exemplary character, or more accurately, because of it, God allowed Satan to test him through a series of onslaughts.

- It paints a scenario where the main characters, Job and his friends, were neither aware of the conversations between God and Satan, nor had any recognition of the existence of Satan and his working in the situation.
- It devotes four chapters to speeches by God addressing a specific individual, Job.

All these hint at the Book of Job being a significant book through which God intends to teach us deep and important truths. We therefore need to ponder prayerfully over these profound truths and respond deeply to them so that they can become a part of our life.

The messages on which this book is based were preached in the context of a shared experience in the outworking of church life. I am thankful to God for the continuing fellowship, encouragement and prayer support of the brethren over many years.

The publication of this book is itself an expression of church life. Several brethren have contributed in specific ways, including transcribing and editing the messages, proof reading and preparing the book for publication.

As an expression of fellowship in learning, growing and serving the one true God, this book is offered free as a gift to God's people. If you have no further use for this book, please pass it to someone who may benefit from it.

May this book lead you to a deeper worship of our wonderful God and to an unwavering faith in and commitment to Him and His ways. May it also help you to appreciate more deeply the Scriptures He has inspired for our learning.

Preface to second edition

I am thankful to the Lord for His provision and undertaking in many ways. I have received much encouraging feedback from brethren in different parts of the world on the first edition of Understanding Job and on the two subsequent books The Two Kingdoms and Man of Faith. I am thankful for brethren in other countries who have helped in the printing and distribution of these books. It is a meaningful expression of fellowship and oneness among God's people in the universal church.

For this second edition of Understanding Job, questions have been added at the end of each message for personal reflection and group discussion. This is in response to requests by readers. There is no change to the text of the messages for this second edition.

Lim Kou