

GOD, SATAN, JOB, AND THE TRIALS OF HAITI

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Beloved Haiti is one of the most abused and one of the most hated little countries on the face of the earth, at least as far as recent history can tell us. Very few countries in the world have a history as tumultuous, as disturbed and as painful as Haiti does. Over the last three decades or so this little nation has made international headlines on several occasions and most of the times in a very negative light.

In a previous article published some years ago, I established the theological fallacy of Haiti's supposed and much publicized satanic pact used by many to explain the country's seemingly never ending troubles (1). Now, I want to do something else. I invite you to follow an analogy with me and consider some unusual similarities I have found between Haiti's history and the Old Testament believer and giant in the faith called Job; I have found a pattern of satanic destruction with common elements between them.

Most people feel comfortable talking about the patience of Job, but I wonder how many would be willing to take just a sip from the cup that he drank. Likewise, almost everybody wants to discuss Haiti and even go there for some reason, from movie stars and celebrities of various sorts to singers and politicians; but I wonder how many of them would be willing to experience the sufferings of Haiti for just one week – in their own soul and in their own flesh. How many would volunteer?

Both Job and Haiti have enjoyed blessings from God prior to enduring great sufferings generated by the jealousy and wrath of the Devil. Between the life of Job and the history of Haiti, I have found three distinct but common chronological and theological periods. Let's have a quick tour.

I. The Glory Days

The first period is a period of protected glory. In the case of Job, the Scriptures say there was no one like him in the whole region due to his wealth, his fame, his justice and his spirituality; he was the greatest man among all the people of the East:

In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil. He had seven sons and three daughters, and he owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five

hundred donkeys, and had a large number of servants. He was the greatest man among all the people of the East. (Job 1:1-3)

Similarly, if we consider the horrors of institutionalized slavery and the type of social and economic justice (or lack thereof) that existed in the new world up until the early part of the 19th century, Haiti is the only place where real freedom flourished for all men, women and children, regardless of ethnicity, skin color, education, wealth, or country of origin. Haiti rose up against slavery and colonialism and put a dramatic end to both systems when it declared its independence from France on January 1st, 1804. On account of the success of the Haitian Revolution, the Haitian people stood among the greatest and the most humane societies of the world during that time, and the ripple effects of this success were felt beyond the Caribbean Sea. As an example, here is an excerpt from a speech given by the great American Frederick Douglas on the immense significance of the Haitian Revolution (2). This one is relatively long but it's worth the read as it points to how a famous and well respected non-Haitian expressed his appreciation for what Haiti had accomplished with regards to the universal rights of people to be free:

Until Haiti struck for freedom, the conscience of the Christian world slept profoundly over slavery. It was scarcely troubled even by a dream of this crime against justice and liberty. The Negro was in its estimation a sheep like creature, having no rights which white men were bound to respect, a docile animal, a kind of ass, capable of bearing burdens, and receiving strips from a white master without resentment, and without resistance. The mission of Haiti was to dispel this degradation and dangerous delusion, and to give to the world a new and true revelation of the black man's character. This mission she has performed and performed it well. Until she spoke no Christian nation had abolished Negro slavery. Until she spoke no Christian nation had given to the world an organized effort to abolish slavery. Until she spoke the slave ship, followed by hungry sharks, greedy to devour the dead and dying slaves flung overboard to feed them, ploughed in peace the South Atlantic painting the sea with the Negro's blood. Until she spoke, the slave trade was sanctioned by all the Christian nations of the world, and our land of liberty and light included. Men made fortunes by this infernal traffic, and were esteemed as good Christians, and the standing types and representations of the Savior of the World. Until Haiti spoke, the church was silent, and the pulpit was dumb. Slave-traders lived and slave-traders died. Funeral sermons were preached over them, and of them it was said that they died in the triumphs of the Christian faith and went to heaven among the just.

He continued to describe what he saw in the Haitian people during his time in the country as a United States Minister representing his own country in the early part of the 19th century:

They are in many respects a fine looking people. There is about them a sort of majesty. They carry themselves proudly erect as if conscious of their freedom and independence.

As is the case for anything precious, both Job and Haiti took serious precautionary measures to guard and protect the blessings received. Job always prayed to God Almighty, asking protection and security for his children even when he was not aware of any specific wrongdoing on their part (see Job 1:4-5). Similarly, Haiti's forefathers protected the rights of the citizen to worship God freely according to their own conscience. Also, the nation took protective measures against prospective foreign enemies by building fortresses and strengthening the army. Many of these structures still decorate Haiti's landscape today, the most prominent of them all being the famous 'Citadelle' built by Henri Christophe in the North under orders from Dessalines (3).

While Job was enjoying God's blessings with his family and his estate, and as Haiti was attempting to make the most of its freedom, evil was also lurking in the shadow, ready to strike at the earliest opportunity. We read in the Scriptures that Satan specifically asked God to remove his divine protection so he could attack Job and terrorize him. By bringing his glory to the ground, Satan was hoping that Job will turn against God and curse him (see Job 1:9-11). Were that to happen, the Devil could have easily said to God that none of his creatures really love him or care about him, except when they are blessed; and in this satanic theological discourse, the Devil was looking for a justification for his own existence and his right to blaspheme against the Almighty. Unknown to him, Job was in the middle of a celestial contest whose outcome would have far reaching consequences beyond anything he could ever imagine. Can a man say yes to God no matter what? Can a man stay true to his faith after losing all he has?

For Haiti, I am not aware of any indication, information or revelation that a similar debate ever took place in heaven; but I am inclined to believe that all the wicked spiritual forces behind the slave trade took a serious blow with the success of the Haitian Revolution. As a result they would be willing to break Haiti down in order to make it renounce its own ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity. The kingdom of darkness was disturbed by Haiti's freedom and anticipated prosperity at the start of the 19th century, essentially the same way Job's spirituality and wealth bothered Satan in times past.

And all it took to put an end to the glory days was for God to allow the wicked to follow their evil desires as the inspiration of the Devil was taking shape in their dark minds and turning into actionable items. They were gnashing their teeth, perhaps drooling profusely, while looking at what could become theirs if only they could put their hands on it. Their plotting against their innocent neighbors was the beginning of the end for the first period.

II. The Testing Period

As soon as the Lord God removed the hedge of protection around Job, Satan left heaven and unleashed a relentless series of attacks against Job and his family, in order to terrorize him and force him to curse God and renounce his faith. Over ninety percent of the book of Job is dedicated to this period of intense trials. The story of Job and the last 200 years of Haiti's history point to four distinct types of assault, and together they form a satanic pattern of devastation and death.

1. It all started with foreign invasion. After Satan left heaven and went back to the earth, it became suddenly a matter of foreign policy for the Sabeans and the Chaldeans to invade Job's estate and plunder his wealth. This was done in direct violation of the 10th commandment which prohibits coveting anything that belongs to our neighbors:

You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor. (Exodus 20:17)

Satan doesn't care one bit about God's commandments since he sought to dethrone him at one point in his past. The Scriptures reveal a similar pattern of disdain for God on the part of humans who work under the Devil's control to help him carry out his diverse projects of destruction and mayhem. First, the Sabeans attacked and killed the servants of Job who were in the field before taking away his flocks of several hundred oxen and donkeys:

One day when Job's sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys were grazing nearby, and the Sabeans attacked and carried them off. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!" (Job 1:13-15)

Then, the Chaldeans came and formed three battalions, killed the workers, and took all the camels which were numbered in the thousands:

While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three raiding parties and swept down on your camels and carried them off. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!" (Job 1:17)

Such a detailed account of foreign aggression and damage to Haiti would be hard to compile. Why? Simply because there are too many instances where this little country was occupied by foreign military forces while posing no material threat whatsoever against the invading powers (4). In 2012 Haiti is still under foreign military control and has been for many years now. And have the invaders plundered the resources of the country or weakened its foundation during

each episode? Absolutely! I encourage you to research yourself what Haiti has endured, and I guarantee that you will be amazed by what you find. For example, former American President Bill Clinton offered a public apology in 2010 for his contribution to the destruction of Haiti's agriculture while in office (5). But although profoundly devastating to the country, negative foreign intervention is only one component of the plan. The story continues.

2. Natural disasters constitute the next elements of this pattern. They came to Job in the form of lightnings and building collapse, with widespread death following as the common outcome:

While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, "The fire of God fell from the sky and burned up the sheep and the servants, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!" (Job 1:16)

Up to that point the children of Job were safe, and I wonder what may have been going through his mind on this tragic day as he was receiving these devastating news one after the other. But that, too, changed when he received the news of their simultaneous demise while they were feasting together in a family gathering as they have done many times before:

While he was still speaking, yet another messenger came and said, "Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on them and they are dead, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!" (Job 1:18)

Although death by lightning is rare in tropical Haiti, there is a strong historical record of devastations caused by flooding and earthquakes. In the evening of January 12, 2010, Haiti was devastated by a 7.5 quake that destroyed buildings and made around 200 thousand victims by some estimates, adding to the already deep level of misery that existed before for the vast majority of the people. Despite this terrible tragedy of biblical proportions (6), Haiti has never renounced its God-given right to exist as a free nation, and the Haitian people have never rejected the God of heaven in their collective theology. On the contrary, the Haitian government cancelled the annual carnival celebration and organized three days of national prayer that took place near the ruins of the devastated and collapsed national palace (7). Furthermore, church attendance increased as people turned to prayer and to God for spiritual and emotional comfort. The same way that Job did not sin by charging God of wrongdoing (see Job 1:22), Haiti as a whole has not uttered any blaspheme either, at least as far as I can tell. Let's continue.

3. Poverty and sickness came as parts of the infernal arsenal, following foreign invasion and natural catastrophes. What abject poverty could not do to Job, Satan was hoping to accomplish with sickness:

So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head. Then Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes. His wife said to him, "Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!" He replied, "You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?" In all this, Job did not sin in what he said. (Job 2:7-10)

Here again Job did not blame God for his adversity, and his faith remained as strong as ever. From that point on we no longer see Satan in the story or the human accomplices he found in the Sabeans and the Chaldeans. The attack on Job took a different form.

In what is yet one more point of similarity to the biblical account, Haiti is known today as the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. Most of the people who enjoy using this description of the country do not make an effort to associate this poverty with its known historical causes, namely repeated invasions by foreign military troops coupled with regular natural disasters. It is not hard to understand that natural catastrophes alone can bring any society to its knees. But if you add regular episodes of military aggression to the equation the outcome can be easily predicted and mapped out, with also measurable negative effects on the physical health of the population. Accordingly, various diseases have afflicted part of the Haitian population, the most damaging being HIV/AIDS and the newly introduced Cholera that has already made several thousand victims (8). In all of this, Haiti continues to celebrate its national holidays as an independent and free nation (although under occupation, again), and prayers of all sorts continue to be addressed regularly to the God of heaven by a vast portion of the population.

The resilience of the Haitian people can be easily likened to the perseverance and patience of Job. But what Satan could not do to Job's spirit by using family death, poverty and sickness, his friends attempted to do with their theological speeches. Unknowingly perhaps, the friends of Job tried to break him down with their assumption that some hidden sin on his part was the real cause for his sufferings.

4. Theological injustice is the last and final type of assault. In the life of Job, the target was no longer his family members, his material possessions or even his physical health since they were all gone. Now it was a string of verbal strikes going directly against the very fabric of this giant in the faith. The three friends of Job who came to visit him for his sufferings thought he or his children had committed some secret sin, and therefore their sudden and tragic death was justified (see Job 8:1-4; 15:4-6, 17-26; 34:31-37). They attacked his faith, his fear of God and his integrity, the three things that had made Job who he was and for which he was being tested by the Devil (in whom there is no faith, no fear of God and no integrity!). At some point during the heated theological and philosophical debate, the voice of God was heard from heaven; the Lord

intervened and talked to Job, which brought him the great comfort he had been waiting for. Then God turned his attention Job's three friends and rebuked them for their errors:

After the LORD had said these things to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "I am angry with you and your two friends, because you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has..." (Job 42:7)

I am sure that by now you have already made the connection with Haiti in this analogy. The friends of Job were not able to say the right things about God because they had no idea why Job was suffering so greatly. It had not been revealed to them that the cosmic enemy of both God and man was in a campaign not only to prove to God that man (created in his image) cannot have a pure and strong love for him, but also to simply destroy Job just for the fun of it; we know that Satan comes to steal, kill and destroy (see John 10:10). In a similar way, countless friends of Haiti have attempted to justify the country's current conditions of widespread misery by invoking some secret ancestral sin (1). I wonder what God will tell them on judgment day. In the case of Job's friends, God talked to them directly because he knew them and they could hear his voice although they apparently did not seek his wisdom and counsel while visiting Job. The accusation of Job by his three friends concludes the series of attacks that characterize the testing period, and the response of the Lord introduces the third and final major segment of the story.

III. The Restoration Period

After the Lord rebuked the friends of Job, he instructed him to offer an intercessory prayer on their behalf because of their verbal sins; and after Job had prayed for his friends, God reestablished him in his health and prosperity, essentially giving him double blessings for his troubles:

After Job had prayed for his friends, the LORD made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had before. (Job 42:10)

The Scriptures add that God blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the first (see Job 42:12-17). Job passed the ultimate test of faith with flying colors and stands out in the Scriptures as one of the greatest examples of patience and perseverance (see James 5:10-12). I would not be wrong to say that on judgment day Job will stand on God's side and his testimony will rise against the Sabeans, against the Chaldeans, and against Satan. His restoration was possible because the Lord God is just, and full of compassion and mercy. As a result, he would never let the Devil terrorize his people indefinitely.

But can we expect the same for Haiti, and will the God of heaven stop the devastation to make the country prosperous again? I have no answer to this question although I am among those

who pray and hope that he does. You see, this tiny nation covers approximately ten thousand square miles only, so its prosperity should be relatively easy to establish from a human and technical standpoint. In the meantime, my question to you is what role will you choose to play in the Haitian version of Job's story?

I know for sure that some people will be like Job's friends and try to elaborate on things they don't really understand, and in the process abuse and slander Haiti verbally and theologically; they seem to forget that the Scriptures teach that only the revealed things belong to us humans while anything concealed belongs to the Lord (see Deuteronomy 29:29). Others will take pleasure to participate in the satanic plan of destabilization and destruction like the Sabeans and the Chaldeans, and help to continue the devastation of the country with their actions? While no one can know for sure what is in store for Haiti, I believe you can choose what part to play in this ongoing reenactment of the age-old battle between good and evil, between faith and despair, between blessings and curses, between what's right and what's wrong. At this point in time, it is entirely up to you. What will it be?

Notes and References:

(1) J.R. Gelin (2005). God, Satan, and the birth of Haiti ([Part I](#) [Part II](#) [Part III](#))

(2) A lecture given by Frederick Douglas at the Haitian Pavilion dedication ceremony at the World Fair held in Chicago, IL:

[http://thelouvertureproject.org/index.php?title=Frederick Douglass lecture on Haiti \(1893\)](http://thelouvertureproject.org/index.php?title=Frederick_Douglass_lecture_on_Haiti_(1893))

(3) For a view of the Majestic Citadelle click on this link: <http://www.wmf.org/project/citadelle-henry>

(4) Brief outline of foreign military interference in Haiti:

http://soc.hfac.uh.edu/artman/publish/article_94.shtml

(5) An article on Bill Clinton's apology:

http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/35967561/ns/world_news-americas/#.Tvd7NTUV0_c

(6) U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton described the devastation as 'biblical':

http://articles.cnn.com/2010-01-18/opinion/mcalister.haiti.faith_1_earthquake-haitian-people-haitian-war?_s=PM:OPINION

(7) Haitian President René Préal declared three days of national prayer and repentance in which he participated along with other government officials:

<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,585650,00.html>

(8) HIV/AIDS is under control now but it has already killed thousands of people after its introduction into the country during the 1980's. Cholera was not present in Haiti prior to the arrival of MINUSTAH. Field and genetic studies have revealed that the strain causing massive infections and death comes from a group of UN soldiers from Nepal stationed in the lower Central Plateau region: http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/eid/article/17/7/11-0059_article.htm

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