



World Christian Fellowship

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Book of Job

Name meaning: Job bears the name of the narrative's primary character. This name might have been derived from the Hebrew word for "persecution," thus meaning "persecuted one,".

Arabic word meaning "repent," thus bearing the name "repentant one."

The author recounts an era in the life of Job, in which he was tested, and the character of God was revealed.

New Testament writers directly quote Job two times (**Romans 11:35; 1 Corinthians 3:19.**)

Ezekiel 14:14, 20 and **James 5:11** show Job was a real person.

Author and Year Written:

The book does not name its author.

Job is an unlikely candidate because the book's message rests on Job's ignorance of the events that occurred in heaven as they related to his ordeal.

One Talmudic tradition suggests Moses as author since the land of Uz (1:1) was adjacent to Midian where Moses lived for 40 years, and he could have obtained a record of the story there.

Solomon is also a good possibility due to the similarity of content with parts of the book of Ecclesiastes, as well as the fact that Solomon wrote the other Wisdom books (Solomon wrote **Psalms 72 and 127**). Though he lived long after Job, Solomon could have written about events that occurred long before his own time, in much the same manner as Moses was inspired to write about Adam and Eve.

Several suggestions have been put forth as probable authors: Elihu, the fourth friend who spoke toward the end of the story; various biblical writers and leaders; or many editors who compiled the material over the years. Isaiah, Hezekiah, Jeremiah, and Ezra have also been suggested as possible authors, but without support.

While there is no definitive answer, it was most likely an eyewitness who recorded the detailed and lengthy conversations found in the book. In Old Testament times, authors sometimes referred to themselves in the third person, so Job's authorship is a strong possibility.

The date of the book's writing may be much later than the events recorded therein.

This conclusion is based on:

1. Job's age (42:16)
2. Job's life span of nearly 200 years (42:16) which fits the patriarchal period (Abraham lived 175 years; Genesis 25:7)
3. The social unit being the patriarchal family.

4. The Chaldeans who murdered Job's servants (1:17) were nomads and had not yet become city dwellers.
5. Job's wealth being measured in livestock rather than gold and silver (1:3; 42:12)
6. Job's priestly functions within his family (1:4, 5)
7. Silence on matters such as the covenant of Abraham, Israel, the Exodus, and the law of Moses. The events of Job's journey appear to be patriarchal. Job, on the other hand, seemed to know about Adam (31:33) and the Noahic flood (12:15).

These cultural/historical features found in the book appear to place the events chronologically at a time probably after Babel (Gen. 11:1–9) but before or contemporaneous with Abraham (Genesis 11:27).

Historical background:

This book begins with a scene in heaven that explains everything to the reader (1:6–2:10).

Job was suffering because God was contesting with Satan. Job never knew that, nor did any of his friends, so they all struggled to explain suffering from the perspective of their ignorance, until finally Job rested in nothing but faith in God's goodness and the hope of His redemption. God vindicated his trust is the culminating message of the book. When there are no rational, or even theological, explanations for disaster and pain, trust God.

The occasion and events that follow Job's sufferings present significant questions for the faith of believers in all ages.

Why does Job serve God?

Job is foreshadowed for his righteousness, being compared with Noah and Daniel (**Ezekiel 14:14–20**), and for his spiritual endurance (**James 5:11**).

Several other questions are alluded to throughout Job's ordeal.

Why do the righteous suffer?

Though an answer to that question may seem important, the book does not set forth such an answer. Job never knew the reasons for his suffering and neither did his friends.

The righteous sufferer does not appear to learn about any of the heavenly court debates between God and Satan that precipitated his pain.

Finally, when he was confronted by the Lord of the universe, Job put his hand over his mouth and said nothing. Job's silent response in no way underestimated the intense pain and loss he had endured. It merely underscored the importance of trusting God's purposes in the midst of suffering.

Because suffering, like all other human experiences, is directed by perfect divine wisdom. In the end, the lesson learned was that one may never know the specific reason for his suffering, but one must trust in Sovereign God. That is the real answer to suffering.

The book treats two major themes and many other minor ones, both in the narrative framework of the prologue (chaps. 1, 2) and epilogue (42:7–17), and in the poetic account of Job's torment that lies in between (3:1–42:6).

A key to understanding the first theme of the book is to notice the debate between God and Satan in heaven and how it connects with the 3 cycles of earthly debates between Job and his friends.

God wanted to prove the character of believers to Satan and to all demons, angels, and people.

The accusations are by Satan, who indicted God's claims of Job's righteousness as being untested. Satan accused the righteous of being faithful to God only for what they could get.

Since Job did not serve God with pure motives, according to Satan, the whole relationship between him and God was a fake. Satan's confidence that he could turn Job against God came, no doubt, from the fact that he had led the holy angels to rebel with him.

Satan thought he could destroy Job's faith in God by inflicting suffering on him, thus showing in principle that saving faith could be shattered.

God released Satan to make his point if he could, but he failed, as true faith in God proved unbreakable.

Even Job's wife told him to curse God (2:9), but he refused.

Job's faith in God never failed (13:15).

Satan tried to do the same to Peter (Luke 22:31–34) and was unsuccessful in destroying Peter's faith (John 21:15–19).

When Satan has unleashed all that he can do to destroy saving faith, it stands firm (Romans 8:31–39).

In the end, God proved His point with Satan that saving faith can't be destroyed no matter how much trouble a saint suffers, or how incomprehensible and undeserved it seems.

A second and related theme concerns proving the character of God to men.

Does this sort of ordeal, in which God and His opponent Satan square off, with righteous Job as the test case, suggest that God is lacking in compassion and mercy toward Job?

Not at all.

James says, *“You have heard of the perseverance of Job and have seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful”* (James 5:11).

It was to prove the very opposite (42:10–17).

Job says, *“Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?”* (2:10).

God's servant does not deny that he has suffered. He does deny that his suffering is a result of sin.

Nor does he understand why he suffers. Job simply commits his ordeal with a devout heart of worship and humility (42:5, 6) to a sovereign God. In the end, God flooded Job with more blessings than he had ever known.

The major reality of the book is the inscrutable mystery of innocent suffering.

God ordains that His children walk in sorrow and pain,

- ✓ sometimes because of sin (**Numbers 12:10–12**),
- ✓ sometimes for chastening (**Hebrews 12:5–12**),
- ✓ sometimes for strengthening (**2 Corinthians 12:7–10**; **1 Peter 5:10**), and
- ✓ sometimes to give opportunity to reveal His comfort and grace (**2 Corinthians 1:3–7**).

But there are times when the compelling issue in the suffering of the saints is unknowable because it is for a heavenly purpose that those on earth can't discern (**Exodus 4:11**; **John 9:1–3**).

Job and his friends wanted to analyse the suffering and look for causes and solutions. Using all their sound theology and insight into the situation, they searched for answers, but found only useless and wrong ideas, for which God rebuked them in the end (42:7).

They couldn't know why Job suffered because what happened in heaven between God and Satan was unknown to them. They thought they knew all the answers, but they only intensified the dilemma by their insistent ignorance.

Job and three friends

Job's three friends namely,

- ✓ Eliphaz the Temanite,
- ✓ Bildad the Shuhite and
- ✓ Zophar the Naamathite.

Job 16:2, *"You are miserable comforters, all of you!"* this is what Job mentions about his friends

Did they get everything wrong?

Job's friends did at least three things right that can be seen in **Job 2:11–13**, *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.*

1. They came to him when he was suffering.
2. They empathized with him. **Job 2:12**,
3. They spent time with him. **V 13** states they were with him for seven days before they offered their advice.

Job and Elihu

Elihu was one of Job's friends who arrives later in the chapters 32 onwards. Elihu was younger than his three other friends so he kept quiet for a long time.

Elihu is identified only as the *“son of Barakel the Buzite, of the family of Ram”*. (**Job 32:2**)

Elihu offers a response to Job that lifts up the Lord, condemns Job's three friends, and rightly confronts Job. (Chapters 32-37)

Job 32:2-3, & 12, *Then the wrath of Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram, was aroused against Job; his wrath was aroused because he justified himself rather than God.³ Also against his three friends his wrath was aroused, because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job.*

¹²I paid close attention to you; And surely not one of you convinced Job,

Some of Elihu advise about God was wonderful.

Job 33:12, *“Look, in this you are not righteous. I will answer you, For God is greater than man.*

Job 34:12, *Surely God will never do wickedly, Nor will the Almighty pervert justice.*

Job 35:13-14, *Surely God will not listen to empty talk, Nor will the Almighty regard it.¹⁴ Although you say you do not see Him, Yet justice is before Him, and you must wait for Him.*

In Job 36—37 Elihu highlights God’s greatness.

Job 36:26, *“Behold, God is great, and we do not know Him; Nor can the number of His years be discovered.*

Job 37:14, *“Listen to this, O Job; Stand still and consider the wondrous works of God.*

Purpose:

We can see the following truths in Job’s experience:

1. There are matters going on in heaven with God that believers know nothing about yet, they affect their lives.
2. Even the best effort at explaining the issues of life can be useless
3. God’s people do suffer. Bad things happen all the time to good people, so one cannot judge a person’s spirituality by his painful circumstances or successes.
4. Even though God seems far away, perseverance in faith is a most noble virtue since God is good and one can safely leave his life in His hands.
5. The believer in the midst of suffering should not abandon God, but draw near to Him, so out of the fellowship can come the comfort—without the explanation.
6. Suffering may be intense, but it will ultimately end for the righteous and God will bless abundantly.

Challenges in Interpretation

The most critical interpretive challenge involves the book's primary message.

The question of why Job suffers is never revealed to Job, though the reader knows that it involves God's proving a point to Satan—a matter which completely transcends Job's ability to understand.

James' commentary on Job's case (5:11) draws the conclusion that it was to show God's compassion and mercy, but without apology, offers no explanation for Job's specific ordeal.

Readers find themselves, putting their hands over their mouths, with no right to question or accuse the all wise and all-powerful Creator, who will do as He pleases, and in so doing, both proves His points in the spiritual realm to angels and demons and defines His compassion and mercy.

Engaging in "*theodicy*," i.e., man's attempt to defend God's involvement in calamity and suffering, is shown to be appropriate in these circumstances, though in the end, it is apparent that God does not need or want a human advocate.

The book of Job emotionally illustrates **Deuteronomy 29:29**, "*The secret things belong to the LORD our God.*"

The nature of **Job's guilt and innocence raises perplexing questions.**

God declared Job perfect, upright, fearing God, and shunning evil. **Job 1:1**, *There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil.*

Job's comforters raised a critical question based on Job's ordeal:

Had not Job sinned?

- On several occasions Job readily admitted to having sinned (7:21; 13:26).
- Job did question the extent of his sin as compared to the severity of his suffering.
- God rebuked Job in the end for his demands to be blameless of the comforters' accusations (Job 38–41).

God declared that what Job said was correct and what the comforters said was wrong (42:7).

Another challenge comes in keeping separate the pre-understandings that Job and his comforters brought to Job's ordeal.

All agreed that God punishes evil, rewards obedience, and no exceptions are possible.

- Job, due to his suffering innocently, was forced to conclude that exceptions are possible in that the righteous also suffer.
- He also observed that the wicked prosper.

These are more than small exceptions to the rule, thus forcing Job to rethink his simple understanding about God's sovereign interaction with His people.

The long disputes between Job and his accusers were attempts to reconcile the perceived inequalities of God's reckoning in Job's experiences.

This method is dangerous. In the end, God offered no explanation to Job, but rather called all parties to a deeper level of trust in the Creator.

Understanding this book requires:

1. Understanding the nature of wisdom, particularly the difference between man's wisdom and God's,
2. Admitting that Job and his friends lacked the divine wisdom to interpret Job's circumstances accurately, though his friends kept trying while Job learned to be content in God's sovereignty and mercy.

The turning point or resolution for this matter is found in Job 28 where the character of divine wisdom is explained.

- Divine wisdom is rare and priceless
- Man cannot hope to purchase it.
- God possesses it all.

We may not know what is going on in heaven or what God's purposes are, but we must trust Him. Because of this, the matter of believers suffering takes a back seat to the matter of divine wisdom.

Brief Outline of the book:

Total 42 Chapters

Total number of verses 1,068

1. Prologue

- a) Introduction of Job (1:1–5)
- b) Divine Debates with Satan (1:6–2:10)
- c) Arrival of Friends (2:11–13)

2. 3 cycles of debate of Job and his Friends (3:1-37:24)

The First Cycle (3:1–14:22)

- i) Job's first speech expresses despair (3:1–26)
- ii) Eliphaz's first speech kindly protests and urges humility and repentance (4:1–5:27)
- iii) Job's reply to Eliphaz expresses anguish and questions the trials, asking for sympathy in his pain (6:1–7:21)
- iv) Bildad's first speech accuses Job of questioning God (8:1–22)
- v) Job's response to Bildad admits he is not perfect, but may protest what seems unfair (9:1–10:22)
- vi) Zophar's first speech tells Job to get right with God (11:1–20)
- vii) Job's response to Zophar tells his friends they are wrong and only God knows and will, hopefully, speak to him (12:1–14:22)

The Second Cycle (15:1–21:34)

- i) Eliphaz's second speech accuses Job of presumption and disregarding the wisdom of the ancients (15:1–35)
- ii) Job's response to Eliphaz appeals to God against his unjust accusers (16:1–17:16)
- iii) Bildad's second speech tells Job he is suffering just what he deserves (18:1–21)
- iv) Job's response to Bildad cries out to God for pity (19:1–29)
- v) Zophar's second speech accuses Job of rejecting God by questioning His justice (20:1–29)
- vi) Job's response to Zophar says he is out of touch with reality (21:1–34)

The Third Cycle (22:1–26:14)

- i) Eliphaz's third speech denounces Job's criticism of God's justice (22:1–30)
- ii) Job's response to Eliphaz is that God knows he is without guilt, and yet in His providence and refining purpose He permits temporary success for the wicked (23:1–24:25)
- iii) Bildad's third speech scoffs at Job's direct appeal to God (25:1–6)
- iv) Job's response to Bildad that God is indeed perfectly wise and sovereign, but not simplistic as they thought (26:1–14)

The Final Defense of Job (27:1–31:40)

- i) Job's first monologue affirms his righteousness and that man can't discover God's wisdom (27:1–28:28)
- ii) Job's second monologue remembers his past, describes his present, defends his innocence, and asks for God to defend him (29:1–31:40)

The Speeches of Elihu (32:1–37:24)

- i) Elihu enters the debate to break the deadlock (32:1–22)
- ii) Elihu charges Job with presumption in criticizing God, not recognizing that God may have a loving purpose, even in allowing Job to suffer (33:1–33)
- iii) Elihu declares that Job has disputed God's integrity by claiming that it does not pay to lead a godly life (34:1–37)
- iv) Elihu urges Job to wait patiently for the Lord (35:1–16)
- v) Elihu believes that God is disciplining Job (36:1–21)
- vi) Elihu argues that human observers can hardly expect to understand adequately God's dealings in administering justice and mercy (36:22–37:24)

3. God's response

a) God Interrogates Job (38:1–41:34)

- i) God's first response to Job (38:1–40:2)
- ii) Job's answer to God (40:3–5)
- iii) God's second response to Job (40:6–41:34)

b) Job Confesses, Worships, and Is Vindicated (42:1–17)

- i) Job passes judgment upon himself (42:1–6)
- ii) God rebukes Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar (42:7–9)
- iii) God restores Job’s family, wealth, and long life (42:10–17)

Conclusion:

Job’s plight of undeserved suffering compels us to ask the age-old question, **“Why do bad things happen to good people?”**

The answer given to Job may or may not satisfy the reader. God allows pain for good reason, but He may never reveal those reasons.

Job did not reject God, but Job did challenge and accuse God. The Almighty God quieted Job decisively when He finally thundered His own perspective on the situation.

God did not answer Job’s question of “Why?”

Instead of answering Job God overwhelmed him and his friends with the truth of His majesty and sovereignty. Job came away with a deeper sense of God’s power and splendour, trusting Him more.

Job 42:5-6, *“I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; But now my eye sees You; Therefore I retract, And I repent in dust and ashes.”*

Application for today:

- Pain inevitably afflicts each one of us.
- Suffering is unavoidable in this life.

Elihu's life and speech offer many insights for today.

1. Elihu dealt with the real issues of the situation rather than looking at the situation from a human perspective.
2. Elihu emphasized God and His greatness rather than focus on a human response to problems.
3. Elihu responded with respect, allowing others to speak first before offering his own response.

These traits can help us today as we seek to understand why God allows suffering and as we attempt to help others who face suffering.

Will your relationship with God be enough when trials come?

Will you trust Him through your suffering?

Read Job 38–42.

- ✓ Spend time with the Almighty.
- ✓ Pray for a stronger faith in the powerful Creator described in those chapters.
- ✓ Pray for a right perspective of Him so that you might see your situation through His eyes.

Instead of asking where God is in the midst of your pain, the book of Job affirms God's control and asks us, "Where are we in our pain?"

Are we trusting our Creator, even though we cannot understand our circumstances?"