

I. Introduction to Job

- Job is said to be one of the most difficult books of the Bible to translate and interpret. This is due to:
 - The mixture of poetic language, prose and conversation (beginning and end differ from middle)
 - Unique Hebrew words not found in other books of the Hebrew Bible
 - There are varying patterns in the discussion portions
- Authorship is unknown, perhaps a collection of writers that were compiled.
- Some scholars debate if the story is historical or a parable.
- The completed form of Job we have now is thought to have been compiled between the middle 6th and middle 4th centuries (Persian Archaemenid period).
- The setting is in the Patriarchal period. The location is said to be the land of Uz. This name is said to be a poetic name for Edom. This area lies to the south of Palestine. It was known in ancient times as the “East”, or Kedom and renowned for wisdom.
- Job’s name in Hebrew means “hated”.
- Three main points in Job:
 - Human suffering is not necessarily deserved.
 - Claiming that suffering is deserved will cause people to unfairly attack the character of the one suffering or even God Himself.
 - It is impossible to understand the meaning of suffering or the mind of God

II. The Lord gives and he takes

- Job is a blessed and wealthy man. He has 10 children, seven of them sons.
- He has many possessions: 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 female donkeys and a large residence. It is suggested from the reading that his children that are adults and have their own homes, perhaps on Job’s land.
- Job is described as the greatest of all peoples in the East.
- He is likely not of the same descent as Abraham.
- The way in which Job is described makes him appear more virtuous than either Noah or Abraham.
- Job kept his family focused on being sanctified and wanted them right before the Lord (1:4, 5).
- In chapter 1, there is apparently a convention before the Lord God of his angels and the Adversary (what the word “satan” means in Hebrew) makes an appearance.
- God, after finding out Satan has been wandering about the earth, inquires as to Satan’s opinion about Job and his loyalty to God. Satan counters that Job is dedicated because God has given him a prosperous life, but if that was taken away, Job would fall. God allows Satan to have power over Job’s possessions and family, but not over his body.
- The trials begin. Notice the pattern of events:
 - Act of war: Sabeans (same word in Hebrew as “Sheba”) take his oxen and donkeys and kill the servants that are with them.
 - Act of nature: fire from the sky (lightning?) kills Job’s sheep and shepherds.
 - Act of war: “Chaldeans” (an anachronistic name, likely nomadic bandits) take his camels and kill more of Job’s servants.
 - Act of nature: a strong wind knocks down the house that Job’s children are assembled in. All are lost.
- All of these events are reported to Job at one time, with each bearer of terrible news entering his presence while the previous one is still relating news.
- Job’s reaction in 1:20-22 is not unexpected. He rises up, tears his clothing, and falls down on his face before the Lord.
- Job’s statement in verse 21 is interesting. He states “Naked I came from my mother’s womb and naked shall I return there”. Since a person never returns to the womb of his mother, where is Job talking about returning to?
- Our protagonist recognizes that all things are from God and that He retains control over them. The key thing that the Bible teaches us in 1:22 is that Job did not sin before God in reaction to this unimaginable trial. Job also does not blame God (although Job is unaware that these tragedies were in fact brought about by God).

III. Skin for skin

- An unknown amount of time passes and at yet another heavenly gathering, the Adversary again is before God after romping about the world. God seems to be proud of Job keeping his faith in spite of Satan's attacks.
- Satan requests permission to test Job's resolve even further by attacking him physically. God lifts his previous prohibition, but demands that Satan not take Job's life (which would make the test pointless anyway).
- Satan infests Job with painful boils that cover Job from head to toe. Job is in such misery that he goes to sit in a pile of ashes (likely the burn pile for dung) and scrapes himself with a fragment of pottery.
- Mrs. Job speaks up and demands that Job simply set aside his dedication to God, curse against Him and just die. We tend to be hard on Mrs. Job, but consider what she has been through. How many mothers could lose 10 children in one day and remain stable?
- Job, refuting her comments as foolish, explains to her that they cannot simply accept good things that come from God, but adversity as well. Once again, we are told that in facing this second test, Job did not sin.

IV. With Friends like These...

- Upon hearing of the calamities that have befallen Job, three of his friends come to see him. They are Elipaz, Bildad and Zophar.
- As they approach Job, they do not recognize him. The three men tear their own clothes at the sight of their beleaguered friend. They sit with Job in silence for seven days recognizing the tremendous pain Job was in.
- Job breaks the silence and for all of chapter 3, bemoans the day of his birth.
- Eliphaz answers Job, starting out cautiously, and stating that Job has helped others, but now needs help himself. Eliphaz, however, then moves on to begin the argument that Job's situation must stem from sin in Job's life.
- This debate continues in chapters 4-37, including the entry of Elihu into the discussion. Elihu was angry that Job refused to recognize the cause for the tortures Job is enduring. Elihu had remained silent until now out of respect for his older friends. Now, however, for 6 chapters, the younger participant rails on, purporting even to know the wisdom of God.

V. Gird up your loins

- God has heard enough and answers Job "out of the whirlwind". 38:2 & 3 must have certainly grabbed Job's attention very quickly.
- The Lord begins to set out a long string of obviously rhetorical questions regarding His control over nature, the beings in nature and even the precession of the stars in the sky.
- Job interjects a brief and humble answer in 40:3-5, but dares not say too much.
- After his lengthy reprimand, Job retracts anything negative he has said about God and repents (42:1-6). The Lord apparently accepts Job's words, but reprimands his three friends. God demands they offer sacrifices and have Job pray on their behalf.
- God restores Job's possessions (two fold) and blesses him with seven more sons and three daughters. His daughters are said to be beautiful, the fairest in all the land. Job lived on another 140 years, seeing four generations of his descendants.

VI. New Testament Thoughts on Sufferings

- Jesus speaks of difficulties His people will face at the hands of their enemies. He reassures us that our Father in Heaven is righteous and fair (Matthew 5:44-45).
- Paul would seem to be the least deserving apostle to endure physical suffering. He is, however, not spared (II Corinthians 11:23-27; 12:7-10). He has also left social status and likely wealth behind (Philippians 3:4-6). He counts the suffering joy and the loss of status gain for Christ.
- Jesus certainly was not deserving of the social rejection, false accusations, physical torture, and criminal execution He experienced.
- James tells us that we should expect trials and be joyful when we do (James 1:2-4) because it will give us endurance.
- The hope God's Word gives us is that although we share in suffering like Paul, we will also be partakers in the consolation-the promise of heaven (II Corinthians 1:3-7) and be glorified with Him one day (Romans 8:17, 18).
- We indeed should console those who are hurting and be with them. Sometimes words are needed and others, simply our presence (I Thessalonians 5:11, 14)