

## NAME

The book gets its name from the central character in the book. The meaning of the word "Job" is uncertain, but according to some it means "one who turns back" to God. Job was probably one of the most famous men of the ancient East.

## AUTHOR

The book of Job is anonymous

Possible authors are:

- Moses (Talmud) - the theory is that he acquired the poem while in Midian and added the prologue and epilogue, or that he learned of Job in Midian and wrote the entire book. It would then be an answer to the problem of the Israelites suffering in Egypt. Pre-law deals with the suffering of the righteous.
- Ezra
- Solomon - or someone of the Solomonic era (Luther, Keil and Delitzsch).
- A writer in the period of Jeremiah
- A writer of the exilic period (6th century B.C.)
- Elihu - Job 32:16,17 seems to indicate Elihu as the author
- Job himself

## DATE

There are compelling reasons for regarding the events of this book as having taken place before the Mosaic period. The following arguments are given in support of this view:

- There is no mention of the Mosaic Law in this book
- There is silence with regard to the great Exodus
- There is no mention of Kingship in Israel (or Israel for that matter)
- Sacrifice was offered by the head of the family instead of an official priesthood. Job acting as the priest of his house is more characteristic of the Patriarchal period.
- The fact that Job lived to be 140 plus years old (probably more like 200 plus) might indicate that he lived in the Patriarchal era (Abraham = 175 years) (Job 42:16; Psalm 90:10)
- Eliphaz the Temanite possibly was descended from Teman, grandson of Esau, whose father's name was Eliphaz also (Genesis 36:15)

## THEME

Type of Literature: Poetry

Composition and Literary Character (WCBS Notes):

The work is a poetic drama with a prose prologue and epilogue. It is thus the first of the poetry books. The book is also classed with the wisdom writings (as are Proverbs and Ecclesiastes), dealing with religious philosophy. As Proverbs deals with the problem of conduct and as Ecclesiastes deals with the problem of purpose in life, so Job deals with the problem of the righteous suffering.

Mythology (Mitchell):

Because the book of Job makes reference to certain mythological figures (Behemoth and

Leviathan), many critical scholars are quick to insist that Job believed in mythology. How are we to account for these and other possible allusions to mythology in the Bible? The Bible at times uses the symbols of ancient mythology without approval. Mythological symbols are used for purpose of illustration and communication of truth without in the least adopting the mythological ideas or even approving these ideas (Daniel 7 uses a winged lion to identify Babylon and Revelation 13 uses an old mythological symbol of evil - dragon with seven heads - to portray evil). However, in the case of Job's usage of the Behemoth and Leviathan, some conservative scholars argue quite effectively that they could be huge "pre-historic" animals now extinct.

Halley page 43: *"Problem of Suffering"*

Mitchell: *"Why Do The Righteous Suffer?"*

This book is a classic discussion of this perplexing philosophical question. Though it does not completely answer the question, it is even today of great help to suffering men and women. Actually, it is only in the New Testament that we approach the complete answer to the problem as we look at Jesus on the cross. There we see the suffering of the only really innocent man. There we see a God who cares so much for us He is prepared to shoulder the whole burden of human sin and suffering.

Various purposes for the suffering of the righteous can be seen fulfilled in this book (WCBS Notes):

- It gives a unique glimpse into the relationship of Satan to God and his enmity toward men
- It teaches the need for repentance of even the most righteous of men
- Preeminently the book teaches the New Testament truth that afflictions are frequently the chastening of a loving Father rather than the expressions of an angry and retributive God
- It teaches the truth that godly men are of God's command apart from mercenary rewards and without God having to obtain man's permission. True faith is implicit faith.

Central Purpose: To show how God uses both adversity and prosperity to lead His people to maturity and to fulfill His purposes.

Unique Problems Dealt With In Job:

- Why do the righteous suffer? And the sinful go unpunished?
- What is basically wrong with the counsel of humanistic religion?
- What great initial lessons does God teach the whole universe of intelligent beings about His person, purpose, and program?
- Is there any goodness without reward?
- Does God care for and protect His people?
- Are adversity and affliction always a sign that the sufferer is wicked?
- Is God a God of pity and mercy?
- How could a good God make a world filled with so many inequalities and injustices

The book does not solve the whole problem of human suffering but it helps in the understanding of the problem. In discussion of the above questions, Job's friends bring the answers according to the common philosophy of that day, while Job, who once accepted their views, now sees that they are not true and gropes for the truth.

Key Word (Nelson's): Sovereignty - The basic question of the book is, *"Why do the righteous suffer if God is loving and all-powerful?"* Suffering itself is not the central theme; rather, the focus is on what Job learns from his suffering—the sovereignty of God over all creation.

Key Verses (Nelson's):

*"Though He slay me, I will hope in Him; yet I will argue my ways to His face"* (Job 13:15).

*"The Almighty—we cannot find Him; He is great in power; justice and abundant righteousness He will not violate. Therefore men fear him; He does not regard any who are wise in their own conceit"* (Job 37:23,24).

Key Chapter (Nelson's): 42 - Upon Job's full recognition of the utter majesty and sovereignty of the Lord, he repents and no longer demands an answer as to the "why" of his plight.

Outline:

I. The Prologue 1,2

II. The Dialogue 3-14

- Round 1 - punitive purpose of suffering / comfortable orthodoxy (debate)
- Some positive things can be said about Job's friends: 1) they came when Job needed them; 2) they stayed with him in adversity; 3) they kept silent for 7 days; 4) they talked with Job sincerely and not about him.
- Zophar assumes that Job is a sinner. He judges Job from his own knowledge instead of allowing God to judge him. Zophar assumes that God operates on principles dictated by man.

III. The Dialogue 15-21

- Round 2 - comfortable orthodoxy (despair)
- Job's denouncement of his friends vanity (16:1-5) presents several principles also stated by James 2:15-17: 1) Whatever our brother's sorrows we should in sympathy make them ours; 2) If we are not affected by our brother's suffering it is because we do not love them as ourselves; 3) Amidst suffering we should encourage our brother's faith, patience, and confidence in God. More so we should supply material needs as well.
- In Eliphaz's argument and Job's reply are the following sad facts of church relationships and man/God relationships: 1) They are blindly lashing out at each other without any basis or proof; 2) Job replies from his personal viewpoint as though he knows himself and God. He didn't. Note the personal pronoun is used 52 times in Job's reply.

IV. The Dialogue 22-31

- Round 3 - comfortable orthodoxy (denounces)
- The key word "tried" in 23:10 is indicative of Job's attitude in testing. The following principles can be seen in Job's trials: 1) Trials and suffering are not always for our punishment but sometimes for our education and training (Job 23:16; Hebrews 12:1,2); 2) God's purpose in our suffering is to demonstrate His wisdom (Job 23:8-16; Ephesians 3:10,11); 3) Trust and faithfulness in God will cost us much (Job 13:15)

V. The Monologue of Elihu 32-37

- Corrective purpose of suffering

VI. The Monologue of Jehovah to Job 38-41

- Instructive purpose of suffering

VII. The Epilogue 42

- Joyful end of righteous suffering

**RECIPIENTS**

Possibly Israelites suffering in Egypt

**CONTRIBUTION TO CANON**

Some truths illustrated

- Because man knows some things that doesn't mean man knows everything
- We ought not let what we don't know effect what we do know
- Suffering can be a mystery
- Suffering indicates the reality of our faith
- If we respond to fire we will end up better (vs. sticking our head in the sand) - keep a strong confidence in God
- A true child of God will persevere - will follow God (In suffering, we always have the choice to turn towards God or away from God. A believer will mostly [we all have our failures] turn towards God).
- Job will rise again with those the Lord will resurrect
- Satan's challenge was also against God and His righteousness - implied that men serve God because they fear (afraid) Him, not because they love Him. Implies that God was unable to command the love of men (response) without material rewards (John 17:36). God stakes His character on Job - trusts Job.
- God does not always prosper the righteous and always punish the wicked. The Christian's ultimate prosperity is in heaven not on Earth. Today's USA Christians (generalization) seem to focus on prosperity as a sign of righteousness and God's blessing
- Suffering can be a ministry opportunity. Job's friends did try to minister to him. Which was a good thing (i.e. it is not spoken of as bad even though not all of what they said was good). Note that: 1) They came when Job needed them; 2) They stayed with him in adversity; 3) They kept silent for 7 days; and 4) They talked with Job sincerely and not about him.

The throne room of God is introduced

There are some very significant descriptive statements contributing to the study of Theology Proper - consider the Yahweh speeches of chapters 38-41.

Job's Christological statements are significant. Job 19:25-27 is foundational to the believer's hope in the coming Redeemer which has been realized in the death and resurrection of Jesus. A comparison of Job 16:19-21 and 1 John 2:1,2 reveals the present ministry of Jesus on behalf of the believer.

The Adversary to our souls is introduced

- Satan is a personality - not an evil force
- Satan has power over nature
- Satan is pernicious - has enmity towards man
- Satan has access to God
- Satan is restricted to do only what God allows - It was the Lord who initiated this test not Satan. God has the ability to use even Satan for His own purposes.

## **RESOURCES**

Gromacki, Robert C. *New Testament Survey*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Book House, 1978

Halley, Henry H. *Halley's Bible Handbook*, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Zondervan Publishing House

Horton, David, General Editor. *The Portable Seminary*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Bethany House Publishers, 2006

*Nelson's Quick Reference - Bible Maps And Charts*, Nashville, Tennessee; Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1994

As general resources I've relied on my class notes from various professors at Biola University (especially those of Dr. Curtis Mitchell), Western Conservative Baptist Seminary (WCBS), and Talbot Seminary as well as notes shared with me by Annie Kartoizian.

Additional reference material has come from the study Bibles of the English Standard Version, New American Standard Version, and The New Living Translation.

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