

Intro to JOB

Background of the book: Job begins the section of books in the Bible called the poetic books. Those five poetic books are: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. Oswald Chambers categorized these five books in this manner: Job teaches us how to suffer, Psalms teaches us how to pray, Proverbs teaches us how to act, Ecclesiastes teaches us how to enjoy, and Song of Solomon teaches us how to love. Tonight, we learn how to suffer with the book of Job.

If there is an overriding theme to the book of Job, it would have to be in the form of this question: “Why do the righteous suffer?” From its start to its finish, the book chronicles the story of Job, a devout believer who is faced with a series of unfortunate tragedies that leave many questions unanswered. With the help of “friends,” the book of Job explores some of these questions with the results being a double blessing for the servant, Job.”

Scholars are not sure as to who wrote the book of Job, nor are they certain where Job fits into the timeline of Jewish history. All that can be said for certainty was that it was written by a loyal Hebrew who did not subscribe to the popular teaching that suffering was always the direct result of sin.

Outline of the Book:

I. Job’s Distress (1,2)

The stage is set by introducing us to Job, a blameless and upright man, who lived in the town of Uz. He was blessed with a large family and great possessions. Job began each day meeting with God and interceding on behalf of his family and children.

Also in this introduction, we are privy to a conversation between God and Satan concerning Job and his devotion to God. Satan suggests that under the right adverse conditions that Job would forsake his allegiance to God. God differs in his opinion and gives Satan the green light to cause calamity to Job’s household.

In a series of unfortunate events, Job loses his cattle, his possessions, and his children. With that, Job tore his robe, shaved his head, and went into mourning. Despite the traumatic loss of family and possessions, Job retained his allegiance to God by declaring, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb and naked I will depart. Blessed be the name of the Lord.”

II. Job’s Lament (3)

Job begins his lament with a declaration that indicates he had hit rock bottom: “May the day of my birth perish...” The rest of the chapter is a poem that clearly paints a picture of the depth of despair Job was experiencing in his heart.

III. Job’s Defense (4-37)

A. First Cycle of Speeches (4-14)

In this first cycle of speeches, Job is visited by three friends—Eliaphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. Chapter 2 tells us that they are so overwhelmed with the sight of Job that they began to weep aloud. They sat speechless with him for a period of seven days before Job gave his lament in chapter 3. Then, each of the friends takes a turn at trying to make sense out of the calamity that has beset Job, with Job making a response for each of their arguments. In essence, the theme that runs throughout their discourse is that Job has obviously done something to set God’s wrath loose on him.

The view of Eliaphaz the Temanite is that the innocent do not suffer, rather, the wicked do. Eliaphaz encourages Job to seek God’s forgiveness and reminds him of the blessings if he repents. Job issues a stern challenge to his friends to please point out the sins that he needs to forgive.

In response, Bildad the Shuhite rebukes Job for his harsh words and maintains that God is always just. He also implies that Job’s children died of their own transgressions and that if he would repent, then he would be blessed by God.

Finally Zophar the Naamathite also rebukes Job for his harsh words, and points out that Job has probably received less suffering than he deserves. In response, Job chides his friends for their attempt to impart wisdom but succeeding in only mocking him and further increasing his despair.

B. Second Cycle of Speeches (15-21)

The second cycle of speeches continues much like the first, with the friends speaking in turn and Job responding. Their positions have not changed, even though their speeches are somewhat shorter, and Bildad, especially, engages in an lengthy attempt to bring Job to a place of repentance.

C. Third Cycle of Speeches (22-31)

The third cycle of speeches continues this quest, with Eliaphaz rebuking Job for his claims of innocence. For the first time, he targets specific sins, of which, he deems Job guilty. Job's response is once again an expression of his desire to find God in the midst of his suffering.

Bildad's speech is short, speaking briefly about God and his greatness. Job's response is that Bildad has not helped him at all with his speech, and that he, too, can give testimony to God's greatness.

Job continues to refuse his friend's counsel and maintain his innocence. He accuses the friends of nonsense, and recounts the day where he was once blessed by God and respected by men. In contrast, he declares that his present situation finds him mocked by men, suffering in pain, and God not answering his plea to be heard.

D. Elihu Speaks (32-37)

A new friend arrives on the scene. Elihu expresses his anger towards Job for justifying himself over God, and disdain over the three friends, whom he has deemed as failures in their quest to refute Job and bring him to repentance. As Elihu speaks, he focuses his arguments on the justice of God, which he feels Job has maligned. He charges Job with adding to his sin by offering words against God without proper knowledge. He concludes his speech with an effort to speak on God's behalf and ascribing righteousness to Almighty God.

IV. Job's Deliverance (38-42)

A. God Speaks (38:1-42:6)

Then "out of the storm," God speaks and addresses the situation. God rebukes Job and accuses him of darkening the counsel of God without proper knowledge. "Brace yourself like a man," God puts to Job, "for I will question you and you will answer me." God then offers Job a series of questions framed in the context of "Where were you when I brought the world into existence?" Overwhelmed, Job admits his unworthiness and inability to answer the questions. Job's final response is to humbly acknowledge God's ability to do everything, and that no purpose of his can be withheld from him. He also confesses that he has spoken to things he could not possibly comprehend and beyond his ability to understand. Having now heard from Almighty God, Job repents.

B. God Blesses (42:7-17)

The Lord rebukes the three friends for speaking on His behalf improperly. He then has Job to offer prayers on behalf of them, upon which, Job was blessed a second time and doubly so. He finds comfort in his family and friends.

Practical Application - The Secret of the Second Blessing

A. How Job Regarded His Friends

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

B. How Job Regarded His Family

- He made a covenant to be faithful to his wife. "I made a covenant with my eyes..." Job 31:1
- He interceded on behalf of his family every day.—Job 1:5

C. How Job Regarded His Things

"Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked will I depart. The Lord gives and the Lord takes away. May the name of the Lord be praised." - Job 1: 21

D. How Job Regarded His God

- He had an interactive knowledge of God
- He had an intimate knowledge of God