

Studying the Book of Job

Why study the Book of Job? The Book of Job describes the sovereignty of God in life's most difficult and painful circumstances. The book explains that there is not always an answer to why people suffer. Believers are to completely trust God in all situations of their lives knowing He cares for them and will work out His loving plan for them. This plan may include hardship and suffering which believers are to endure for the glory of God. The book also unveils the unseen spiritual realm including the confrontation between Satan and God as well as God's creation of the world as a beautiful masterpiece.

The setting of Job is likely during the days of the patriarchs, Abraham and his family. Job's age, (Job 42:16), and his homeland, Uz, being close to the nomadic peoples of the Sabeans and the Chaldeans, as well as other indicators suggest Job lived at a time before the foundation of Israel as a nation. The author of Job is unknown, but the book was accepted early into the canon of the Hebrew Bible. The Old Greek edition of the Hebrew Bible, The Septuagint, produced about 200BC, included the Book of Job. Job is mentioned in Ezekiel 14:14, 20 as a real person. Romans 11:35 and 1 Corinthians 3:19 cite passages from Job and James mentions Job in James 5:11 which also describes God's compassion and mercy.

Basic Outline of Job

The Reasoning of Satan: Chapters 1-2

The Reasoning of Job and Three Friends: Chapters 3-31

The Reasoning of Elihu: Chapters 32-37

The Reasoning of God: Chapters 38-42

Themes of Job: (1) Suffering should be for the glory of God; (2) God sometimes allows suffering as part of His plan for the lives of believers; (3) God allows Satan to be active in strict compliance with God's sovereign plan for His world.

Brief Summary of Book of Job.

The introduction to the Book of Job, chapters 1-2 provide insight for the reader as to why Job lost his children, his wealth and his health. The reader knows the back story that is unknown to Job and those who talk with him. These chapters unveil a glimpse of the spiritual realm of God and those who are allowed into His presence. Without explaining why, Satan is allowed into God's presence. Satan accused God of putting a hedge of protection around Job and reasoned that if this hedge was removed, Job would curse God to His face. God allows Satan to remove all of Job's worldly possessions including his children. When this did not provoke Job to curse God, Satan in another meeting with God, was allowed to touch Job but not take his life as a test to see if Job would curse God. The resulting discussions between Job and his acquaintances are the result of these attempts by Satan to incite Job to curse God. Job's wife held little hope for Job. She counselled him to "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die." Job 2:9.

Chapters 3 to 31 are a series of debates between Job and three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar. The three men accuse Job of sins he had committed that brought about God's judgment upon his life. Job in all these debates steadfastly upheld his integrity. Job revealed his understanding of God as his redeemer and his hope of eternal life. Job said, "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God." Job 19:25-26. In an earlier chapter Job said, "Though He slay me, I will hope in Him." Job 13:15. In chapter 28, Job reasoned that God is the source of wisdom and God said to mankind, "Behold the fear of the LORD, that is wisdom and to turn away from evil is understanding." Job 28:28.

Chapters 32-37 is a long dialogue by Elihu, a young man who had listened to the debates between Job and his three friends. Elihu was angry (he burned with anger) with Job "because he justified himself rather than God," and with the three men, "because they had found no answer, although they had declared Job to be in the wrong." Job 32:2-3. Elihu's reasoning however was not a solution to the issue of why Job was suffering. Elihu held God

in high esteem and spoke of His greatness and mighty attributes. Elihu, like the three others, reasoned that Job must have sinned to bring about God's judgment upon him. So, at the end of all the debates about Job and his suffering, no adequate solution for Job's dilemma was found.

Chapters 38-42 describe one of the most profound speeches in all of the Scriptures. God breaks into the presence of Job and his acquaintances in the dramatic appearance of a whirlwind. Out of this whirlwind God spoke to Job and described the beauty of His creation, His great power and wisdom. In this speech God did not give a reason for the suffering of Job, saying, "Shall a faultfinder contend with Almighty? He who argues with God, let him answer it." Job 40:2. In response to God's speech, Job responded, "I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes see you; therefore, I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes." Job 42:5-6. God then spoke to Eliphaz (representing the three friends), saying they had not spoken of God what was right as had Job. Job 42:7. God demanded that seven bulls and seven rams be presented as a burnt offering to Him, and that Job would pray for them, and God would accept the prayer of Job on their behalf. It is interesting that Elihu is not mentioned by God in this rebuke of Job's friends. It is best not to speculate about the reasons for this omission. Some have suggested many ideas about this and about who Elihu was or represented. In the final section of Job 42, the restoration of Job's fortunes is described including blessing Job with much wealth, and possessions and the increase of his family of seven sons and three daughters. It is then stated that Job lived 140 years after these events and saw his descendants to four generations.

Verses to memorize from the Book of Job, (ESV).

12:13 With God are wisdom and might; he has counsel and understanding.

13:15 Though he slay me, I will hope in him.

19:25-26 For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. 26 And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God.

28:28 Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding.

40:1-2 And the Lord said to Job: 2 Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty? He who argues with God, let him answer it.

42:5-6 I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; 6 therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.

Note: There are many other verses in Job that could be added to this listing.

Resources for studying the book of Job.

See the article on how to study the Bible for suggestions on the method of Bible study and recommended resources to obtain. Suggested commentaries and studies are listed below for a more extensive study. Some are available on-line in a pdf format.

One Hour – One Book
Scroll down to video on Job.

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSrCJNW5eUWQMyVw_2VqW_w

Commentaries

Alden, Robert L. *Job*. New American Commentary, Broadman & Holman, 1993.

Andersen, Francis I. *Job*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries series. InterVarsity Press, 1976.

Constable, Thomas. *Notes on Job*, latest edition. Online at Plano Bible Chapel.

Garrett, Duane A. *Job*. Evangelical Exegetical Commentary. Lexham Academic, 2024.

Kline, Meredith G. *Job*. The Wycliffe Bible Commentary. Moody Press, 1962.

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Zuck, Roy B. *Job*. Everyman's Bible Commentary series. Moody Press, 1978.

Zuck, Roy B. *Job*. The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament, Victor Books, 1985.

Studies

Note: Journal articles are available online in .pdf format.

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Hanna, Kenneth G. *From Moses to Malachi: Exploring the Old Testament*. 2nd ed. CrossBooks, 2014.

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Howard, David M., Jr. *An Introduction to the Old Testament Historical Books*. Moody Press, 1993.

Page, Sydney H. T. *Satan: God's Servant*. Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 50:3 (September 2007): 449-65.

Waters, Larry J. *Job 19:23-27: A Living Redeemer*. The Moody Handbook of Messianic Prophecy. Moody Publishers 2019. Pages 437-449.

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Zuck, Roy B. *A Theology of the Wisdom Books and the Song of Songs*. A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament. Moody Press, 1991.