

STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF JOB

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The BOOK OF JOB

The Book of Job has been heralded as a masterpiece of literature for centuries. Professor Richard G. Moulton suggests that a majority of literary people would pronounce the book the greatest poem in the world's great literature. Victor Hugo declared: "Tomorrow, if all literature was to be destroyed and it was left to me to retain one work only, I should save Job." Tennyson characterized it "the greatest poem, whether of ancient or modern literature." "The Book of Job," said Daniel Webster, "taken as a mere work of literary genius, is one of the most wonderful productions of any age or of any language." Thomas Carlyle exclaimed that it is "one of the Grandest things ever written," and historian Philip Schaff says, "The Book of Job rises like a pyramid in the history of literature, without a predecessor and without a rival."

Contrary to the accusations of certain modernists, Job was a real historical character. In Ezek. 14:14 he is mentioned along with Noah and Daniel and hence he is as historical as they. In the NT James reminds us of "the patience of Job." (5:11) Job's residence was in Uz (northern Arabia) where he enjoyed the fame of a successful business man; in fact, he is represented as "the greatest of all the children of the east." (1:3) The setting of the narrative is obviously in the patriarchal period, for: (1) there is no mention of the Law of Moses in the book, (2) Job functions as the priest in offering sacrifices for his family (1:5), (3) Job's longevity is typical of the patriarchs (42:16).

THE BOOK ANALYZED

The Book of Job, for study purposes, may be advantageously divided into the following sections: I. Job is tested (1, 2); II. The Controversy with his three friends (3-31); III. Eliphaz's presentation (32-37); IV. Jehovah speaks to Job (38-41); V. Job is blessed (42). Let us reflect upon some of the points of this magnificent book of inspiration.

JOB'S TESTING - The Almighty challenged Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? for there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God, and turneth away from evil." (1:8) This, of course, does not imply that Job was sinlessly perfect; it does affirm that he was a spiritually mature, devoted servant of God. Satan retorted that Job did not serve his Maker for "naught"; if his prosperity were removed, "he will renounce thee to thy face." And so Satan was granted permission to test the patriarch. The range of Job's afflictions covers every facet of human endurance. (1) All of his material possessions are lost; he is financially bankrupt (weaker men have committed suicide for less!). (2) His children are killed (consider what your grief would be if your child was killed, and multiply it by ten!). (3) He is afflicted with a dreadful disease from head to foot and thus sat among the "ashes" of the city dump. (4) His wife spiritually forsakes him and urges Job to "renounce God, and die (Satan's very hope). (5) Finally, he becomes the utter contempt of his contemporaries. Yet, through it all, he does not renounce his Creator, but later proclaims, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him."

THE CONTROVERSY - Job's three friends (Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar) having heard of his plight, came to comfort him. They are stricken mute by the awesomeness of his appearance and sit for seven days in respectful silence. The philosophy of Job's friends can be simply expressed in this fashion. (1) Suffering is the direct result of personal sins (and in proportion thereto). (2) Job is suffering greatly. (3) Therefore, Job has committed some great sin. Their error, of course, was in the major premise. There is no basis for the assumption that suffering is always the result of personal sins. Job contends

that observation reveals that piety does not exempt from suffering and frequently "the tents of robbers prosper." (12:6) The man of Uz thus defends his innocence. He does not claim sinlessness, but he believes that his punishment is out of proportion with any transgression. Occasionally, Job seems to make drastic statements, but he confesses that his utterances are those of a "desperate" man. (6:26)

ELIHU'S POSITION - Elihu is angry with Job's "comforters" because they condemned the patriarch and offered no solution. He was further angry with Job himself because he "justified himself rather than God." (32:2, 3) That is, he had been more concerned with his own honor than God's. Further, Elihu contends that suffering is not necessarily penal, it may be to teach, to strengthen, or preventative in nature. Job listens in silence.

JEHOVAH SPEAKS - Jehovah does not condescend to quibbling with Job, but rather, he majestically overpowers him with a grand affirmation of his universal sovereignty as evidenced by the unparalleled glories of the created world. Read and be thrilled by Job 38-41. This incomprehensible chronicle of divine power reduces Job to the proper level of humility. Professor Newton Wray compares it to Peter's humiliation, "I am a sinful man," when impressed with the power of Christ. (Lk. 5:6-9) Job thus acknowledges, "Therefore have I uttered that which I understood not. Things too wonderful for me, which I knew not." And again, "Wherefore I abhor myself, And repent in dust and ashes." (42:3, 6)

JOB BLESSED - Because Job maintained his integrity, he is commended and blessed by the Lord. As to material prosperity, "Jehovah gave Job twice as much as he had before." He was again blessed with ten children. The sterling character of this man of God is evidenced by his prayer for his three pseudo-comforters. Truly, he was a great man.

LESSONS FROM JOB

Numerous lessons of inestimable value can be gleaned from this holy book. Notice:

1. Satan charged that God is only served by man out of selfishness. Job demonstrates otherwise; he lost all, yet still served God. God is "worthy to be praised" (Psa. 18:3) for his own self, apart from the blessings he bestows. This is a vital point of the book.
2. The Book of Job is an eloquent commentary on man's inability to subject the painful experiences of human existence to a meaningful analysis. God's workings are far beyond the limits of man's finite mind. Whatever our circumstances, we must trust our God!
3. Suffering is not always the result of personal sin; in fact, it may be a compliment. God permitted Job to suffer because he was proud of him. He was Jehovah's answer to Satan's challenge! Job's misfortunes therefore, were a tremendous tribute to him.
4. This book is a true portrait of the word "patience." (Jas. 5:11) Even when we do not understand the tragic events that befall us, if we bravely endure, this is patience.
5. The book helps us to deal with the paradox of how Jesus Christ, the world's most righteous person, could be the world's greatest sufferer. Job's suffering defended God's honor; Christ's death permitted man's salvation while maintaining God's justice.

Christian Courier

GENERAL INFORMATION

The book of Job stands by itself, is not connected with any other, and is therefore to be considered alone. Many copies of the Hebrew Bible place it after the book of Psalms, and some after the Proverbs, which perhaps has given occasion to some scholars to imagine it to have been written by Solomon, Isaiah, or some other of the later prophets. But as the subject appears to have been much more ancient, so we have no reason to think but that the composition of the book was; and that therefore, it is most fitly placed first in this collection of divine morals. Also, being doctrinal, it is proper to precede and introduce the book of Psalms, which is devotional and the book of Proverbs, which is practical; for how shall we worship or obey a God whom we know not. As to the book:

I. Inspiration: We are sure that it is given by the inspiration of God, though we are not certain as to the penman. The Jews, though no friends to Job because he was a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel, as faithful conservators of the oracles of God committed to them, have always retained this book in their sacred canon. The history is referred to by one New Testament writer (James 5:11) and one passage (Job 5:13) is quoted by the apostle Paul with the usual form of quoting scripture, "It is written" (I Corinthians 3:19).

II. Integrity: We are sure that it is a true history, and not a romance, though the dialogues are poetical. No doubt there was such a man as Job: the prophet Ezekiel names him with Noah and Daniel (Ezek. 14:14). The narrative we have here of his prosperity and piety, his strange afflictions and exemplary patience, the substance of his conferences with his friends, and God's discourse with him out of the whirlwind, with his return at length to a very prosperous condition, no doubt is exactly true.

III. Date: We are sure it is very ancient, though we cannot fix the precise time either when Job lived or when the book was written. So many and so plain are the evidences of its antiquity that we have reason to think it of equal date with the book of Genesis itself, and that Job was contemporary with Isaac and Jacob. He lived before the age of man was shortened to seventy or eighty, as it was in Moses' day, before the general apostasy of the nations from the knowledge and worship of the true God, and while yet there was no other idolatry known than the worship of the sun and moon. He lived while divine knowledge was conveyed, not by writing, but by oral tradition; for to that appeals are made in Chaps. 8:18; 15:18; 5:1. Therefore we have reason to believe we are dealing with a man of the patriarchal age, one who lived before Moses and the giving of the Law.

IV. The Problems of the Book: This book raises several great questions, that are common to the race, and directly or indirectly discusses them. Among these questions the following are most important: (1) Is there any goodness without reward? (Doth Job serve God for naught?) (2) Why do the righteous suffer and why does sin go unpunished? (3) Does God really care for and protect His people who fear him? (4) Are adversity and affliction signs that the sufferer is wicked? (5) Is God a god of pity and mercy? There are presented five solutions of the problem of suffering: (1) The solution of Chapters one and two—that it is a test of character and the last section shows that it is abundantly rewarded when rightly endured. (2) The solution of Job's friends—that it's always a punishment for sin. (3) The solution of Elihu—that it is closely connected with sin, sent as the voice of God to call us back to Him. (4) The solution of Job who never seems fully settled, on one occasion looking to the future for a solution (19:25-27) and later pleading a chance to present his case to God (Chaps. 29-31). (5) The solution of God—that while there is mystery in both good and evil, man's attitude should be one of submission and faith.

V. The Argument: The argument proceeds as follows: (1) There is a conference between God and Satan and the consequent afflictions of Job. (2) The first cycle of discussions with his three friends in which they charge Job with sin and he denies the charge. (3) The second cycle of discussions. In this Job's friends argue that his claim of innocence is a further evidence of his guilt and impending danger. (4) The third cycle. Here the friends argue that his afflictions are just the kind that would come to one who yielded to temptations such as those to which he is subject. (5) Elihu shows how Job accuses God wrongly while vindicating himself and asserts that suffering instructs us in righteousness and prevents us from sinning. (6) God intervenes and in two addresses instructs Job. In the first address, Job is shown the creative power of the Almighty and his own folly in answering God whom animals by instinct fear. In the second address Job is shown that one should know how to rule the world and correct its evils before one complains or accuses God as to the way He rule it. (7) Job repents, prays, and is restored.

VI. Purpose: The purpose of the book is to justify the wisdom and goodness of God in matters of human suffering and especially to show that all suffering is not punitive. Also the book shows that although man cannot understand fully the purpose of God, he can trustingly submit to His care and protection.

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THE OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

- I. Prologue in Heaven and on Earth, Chs. 1 and 2.
- II. Job's Complaint, Ch. 3.
- III. Job's Friends, Chs. 4-27.
 - A. First Cycle of Discussion, Chs. 4-14.
 - 1. Eliphaz, Chs. 4-5.
 - 2. Job replies, Chs. 6-7
 - 3. Bildad, Ch. 8.
 - 4. Job replies, Chs. 9-10
 - 5. Zophar, Ch. 11.
 - 6. Job replies, Chs. 12-14.
 - B. Second Cycle of Discussion, Chs. 15-21.
 - 1. Eliphaz, Ch. 15.
 - 2. Job replies, Chs. 16-17.
 - 3. Bildad, Ch. 18.
 - 4. Job replies, Ch. 19.
 - 5. Zophar, Ch. 20.
 - 6. Job replies, Ch. 21.
 - C. Third Cycle of Discussion, Chs. 22-27.
 - 1. Eliphaz, Ch. 22.
 - 2. Job replies, Chs. 23-24.
 - 3. Bildad, Chs. 25.
 - 4. Job replies, Chs. 26:1-27:12
 - 5. Zophar, Ch. 27:13-23.
- IV. Interlude: In Praise of Wisdom, Ch. 28.
- V. Job's Summing Up, Chs. 29-31.
 - A. The Past, Ch. 29.
 - B. The Present, Ch. 30.
 - C. The Future, Ch. 31.
- VI. Elihu's Interruption.
 - A. Introduction, Ch. 32.
 - B. First Answer, Ch. 33.
 - C. Second Answer, Ch. 34.
 - D. Third Answer, Chs. 35-37.
- VII. God's Reply, Chs. 38:42:6.
- VIII. Epilogue on Earth, Ch. 42:7-17.

This outline taken and adapted only slightly from "From Tragedy to Triumph"
by H. L. Ellison.

EXPANDED OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

I. Prologue in Heaven and on Earth. Chs. 1–3 “Job Faces Calamity”

A. My Servant Job – 1:1-5

1. His character – Note: four synonyms in two pairs
 - a. The first pair of synonyms describe moral characteristics.
 - (1) “Perfect” – indicates moral soundness and integrity. Honest with God and with man.
 - (2) “Upright” – denotes that his thoughts and actions were in the paths of right.
 - b. Second pair denote religious characteristics.
 - (1) “feared God” – revered and loved God. Fear of God dominated his life. This directly touched his religious life.
 - (2) “turned away from evil” – Negative side of his God-fearing life. He loved righteousness. He hated evil.
 - c. Thus Job’s true religion (fear of God) was the basis of this morality.
2. His prosperity – In what did the riches of Job consist?
 - a. His children – Seven sons and three daughters. Job was happy, cf. Ps. 127:3–5. Probably Job counted these first among his possessions. Satan was aware of this, too, as subsequent study will reveal.

B. In the Heavenly Court -- 1:6–12.

1. Jehovah’s question as to Satan’s activity and Job’s integrity.
 - a. In this question the Lord gives a beautiful testimony of Job. It is the same as found in v. 1. Job is perfect, upright, fearing God, hating evil. “Well, Satan, have you not noticed my servant Job? What have you to say about him?”
 - b. In this question the Lord refers to His own work on earth. Surely the Lord has willing servants on earth. Job is one of them.
 - c. Thus the Lord indicates that Satan is rather vainly boasting about his wicked power on earth. Satan’s dominion is not as large as he pretends. And the Lord would diminish his dominion more and more. God had faithful servants on the earth. Job is foremost among them. “Have you not observed him at all?”
2. Satan’s reply – the implication is that Job is serving God for reward. Satan questions God’s justice and righteousness and Jehovah is willing to base his righteousness upon Job’s integrity. Satan contends that his dominion has not diminished. If Job truly feared God it would be so. But if Job served for reward he is a hireling: a servant of Satan, not God.
3. Satan Challenges God Boldly.
 - a. “Put forth thy hand not and touch all that he hath and he will renounce thee to thy face.” Take away Job’s possessions. Remove the protective hedge about him. Make him a poor man, so that he has nothing left. Satan challenges God that he dare not do this for fear that Job’s piety will break down.
 - b. Notice that Satan involuntarily admits that God’s dominion is over all things. “Put forth thy hand...” This implies that God has given Job all that he has and that God only can take it.
 - c. What results does Satan prophesy?
 - (1) He says that Job’s sham-piety will be unmasked. Job is only working for wages. No wages, no piety.
 - (2) It will then be evident that Job does not consider God worthy to be served for his own sake – but only for the sake of blessings. If Job loses all possessions he will say farewell to God.

- (3) Notice therefore that the background of the book is a conflict between God and Satan. And Job is chosen as the subject around which conflict is to be waged. (Of the Book of Revelation). The account of this conflict gives us valuable information.
4. Satan Does Have Power
- a. He receives this power from God.
- (1) God accepts Satan's challenge "Behold, all that he hath is in thy power." Job is in Satan's hand. But God put him there. That is comfort indeed.
- (2) God is sure of his own work in Job. He knows his servant. Satan has been blaspheming God's work — even God's work of grace. But God's grace is sufficient for Job. Job is also in God's hand — and will be forever.
- (3) God's honor is attacked by Satan. God will vindicate His honor in the case of Job for all time. God will shew that Job will serve Him even if he is deprived of all things. It will cost Job a great struggle. Why did all this happen? We know, but Job did not.
- b. Power of Satan over Job limited.
- (1) Satan is permitted to touch all that Job has. It is just as Satan suggested.
- (2) It is emphatically added that Satan may not touch Job himself — not now — only his possessions.
- C. The First Series of Trials. — Job Deprived of All His Possessions in One Day, 1:13–19.
1. The manner in which Job was deprived of his possessions.
- a. Evidently systematic. According to a plan with the help of his (Satan's) servants.
- b. Increasingly painful. Satan knew the order in which Job valued his possessions. In the same order, all he had was taken away from him — oxen, sheep, camels, children. Thus Satan made Job's afflictions increasingly more painful for him. The death of his children was the climax.
- c. Shockingly sudden. The dismantling of Job took only one day. One messenger after another until Job was aware that he had lost all in one day. Among men it is customary that bad tidings are broken gently so as not to shock too severely. But Satan saw to it that this was not done in the case of Job.
- d. Overwhelmingly complete. Satan had said "touch all that he hath." God had said "All that he hath is in thy power." Satan made use of the permission to the limit. Even the exceptions made the blow complete. You notice that in each case Satan spared one servant in order that they might bring tidings to Job. Notice also that Job's wife was spared. This, too, was simply because Satan had a purpose for her.
- e. Wickedly tempting.
- (1) In dismantling of Job we notice three different causes at work.
- (a) Tertiary — The Sabeans, Chaldeans, lightning, storm. (3rd in order)
- (b) Secondary — Satan.
- (c) Primary — The Lord was the first cause — the sovereign God who deals with the hosts of heaven and with the inhabitants of earth according to His own good pleasure. Job said so himself.
- (2) Notice Satan the secondary cause hides himself behind other means as he tempts Job. This is for the purpose of trying to fix the blame for Job's calamities upon God. Job must get the impression that God was angry with him. Then Job would curse God.
- (3) And remember right here, that Job's friends emphasized this very thing — that God is angry with Job. They will talk along the very line that Satan wants.

E. The Second Series of Trials – Physical and Mental, 2:7-10

1. Physical – Most cruelly, Satan smites Job with disease—an incurable disease—with sore boils from head to foot.
2. Mental – Rejection by the community. Job sits upon the dung hill, outside the city, away from society.
3. Desertion by his wife.
 - a. Ridicule – As she goes out to see her suffering husband, she says “Do you still hold fast your integrity?” It is as though we hear Satan himself speaking these words. Job’s wife was a tool of Satan.
 - b. Advice – Curse God and die – These are the identical words which Satan would have her say. Satan could not kill Job, but he hoped through his wife to get him to curse God and Job would take his own life.
4. Job rejects the temptation.
 - a. He rebukes his wife. “You speak as an ungodly, impious woman.” This was a sharp but well-deserved answer.
 - b. He reminds his wife of God’s sovereignty. “Shall we receive good at the hand of God and shall we not receive evil.” Is not God sovereign? Does he not govern all things? Also, when evil comes must we curse God? No!
5. “In all this did not Job sin with his lips” – this seems to imply that Job’s heart was stormy. But Job did not curse God.

F. The Visit of Job’s Friends, 2:11–3:26.

1. The visit was planned with a good purpose.
 - a. As we would expect of friends, who were these men? Eliphaz, the Temanite (a kinsman of Esau); Bildad the Shuhite (a kinsman of Keturah, Abraham’s wife); and Zophar, the Naamathite. Cf. Jere. 49:7. Even as Job, they were godly men of wisdom outside of God’s chosen historic people.
 - b. And indeed is stated in our text.
 - (1) Job’s friends had heard of his calamities. Now some time had elapsed as indicated in Job 7:3 and in the advanced condition of bitterness present in Job when compared to 2:10.
 - (2) Job’s friends agreed to visit him. They were not only friends in prosperity but also in adversity.
 - c. It seemed to promise something good for Job.
 - (1) They intended to mourn with Job. Cf. Romans 12:15.
 - (2) It was intended to comfort Job.
 - (a) Over against the misery in which Job found himself, his friends intended to point to something which might comfort Job.
 - (b) Job needed just this in the midst of his overwhelming affliction. His wife even withheld comfort from him. Would he not appreciate comfort which friends could offer him.
2. The Visit took a very strange turn.
 - a. Job’s friends began with mourning, v. 12. Cried out, wept, tore their clothes, sprinkled dust on their heads.
 - b. But they found no words of comfort.
 - (1) That they could find no words we readily understand.
 - (2) But their silence became eloquent at last. It lasted seven days and nights. (The period of mourning for the dead, cf. Gen. 50:10; I Sam. 31:13). During all that time they must have meditated on the affliction of Job. From what we learn later on from their speeches, we gather that words of comfort failed them because of the turn which their meditation took.

Silently they came to the conclusion that back of this great affliction must be great sin on the part of Job. Surely God must be angry with Job, otherwise such an affliction would not have been sent by God. These and kindred thoughts must have occurred to them.

- c. Thus Satan prepared a new temptation for Job.
 - (1) Gradually the friends must have shown Job by their motions what their final opinion was in this matter. In a way, no doubt, understandable for Job, they intimated that Job was guilty of some great crime—otherwise God, the loving one, should not have sent this great calamity on Job. Thus their silence became a temptation.
 - (2) If an enemy suspects us and slanders us, that hurts. But it hurts a thousand times over when friends suspect us.
 - (3) If the ungodly slander us, it hurts. But if pious men intimate that we are guilty of a crime which we did not commit, that hurts a great deal more.
- 3. The visit promoted a serious evil.
 - a. Job longs for death. Read Chapter 3. This is a terrible chapter. Job first complains against the day of his birth (vv. 3-5); then he desires that night might be destroyed (vv. 6-9); he asks why he was born (vv. 10-12), and wishes such had not been the case (vv. 13-16), for in the grave there is rest (vv. 17-19). Why should the suffering man live (vv. 20-23) for life is unbearable (vv. 24-26). In other words, 1. Why was I born? vv. 3-10. 2. Why was I not born dead? vv. 11-19. 3. Why cannot I die now? vv. 20-26.
 - b. But what we do not find in Job's words.
 - (1) He did not curse God. He never will. He said and will say terrible things. But no matter how deep he falls he will never curse God—the one thing Satan wanted him to do.
 - (2) But surely Job is brought to the edge of an abyss. Though he did not curse God, he did not seek God either. He only mentions God in passing. And though Job does not commit suicide, he lauds the glory of the grave. He thinks death better than life.
 - c. What is the meaning of this chapter in the book?
 - (1) Here we have the lowest level in Job's condition so far. After the first trial Job praised God. After his second trial Job did not sin with his lips. But now he sins with his lips indeed. He is not submissive now.
 - (2) Here is Job's problem. If his theology is correct, he is chief of sinners, but he knows he is not. But if he listens to the testimony of his heart (that he is not a sinner) then his theology, on which he has built his whole life, must be wrong. This thought is more agonizing than the one that he may be chief of sinners. So the firm moorings of his life are gone and his ship is adrift without chart, without light, being carried he knows not where.
 - (3) He turns to his friends for comfort and gets argument.
 - (4) Sheol, vv. 13-19 — Jewish conception of life after death. Hebrew word for the underworld, the place of the shades, it comes from a root word meaning "to penetrate," "to go down deep" Cf. 10:20-22; Psa. 115:17; 6:5; 30:9; Ezek. 32:17-32.
 - (5) Job's trials — He Lost:
 - (a) All his prosperity—cattle, crops, servants, family.
 - (b) His health.
 - (c) The confidence of his wife.
 - (d) Fellowship of the community.

- (e) His love of life.
- (f) His friend's comfort.

II. Job's Friends – Chs. 4-7

A. First Cycle of Speeches: Theme is the Nature of God – Eliphaz emphasizes his holiness and goodness; Bildad his righteousness; Zophar his wisdom; Job laments His apparent injustice.

1. First speech of Eliphaz – Chs. 4-5 – “Suffering is caused by sin.”

- a. First Eliphaz gives short introduction in which he recalls Job's former prosperity; states Job's present appalling condition and intimates his suspicion as to the cause of Job's affliction.
- b. He tells of an experience, a vision.
 - (1) No reason to doubt or think that his vision was a fake. We accept the story as an actual vision. Cf. Abimelech, Pharoah, Nebuchadnezzar. So we have no reason to doubt this vision.
- c. The content of this revelation.
 - (1) Man is more just than God? The implied answer is: No, that cannot be. Because man is a mortal being and God is eternal. Man is weak and God is strong.
 - (2) Man is more pure than his maker? The answer is No. The meaning is that God, though strong, never deals with man in a way not compatible with true morality.
- d. Eliphaz presents his argumentation.
 - (1) First Premise: God is just in sending afflictions.
 - (a) Eliphaz deduces this premise from the revelation he has received. If God is absolutely just and pure in all his doings, then He is just also in sending afflictions.
 - (b) This first premise of Eliphaz' is good. It is sound. It is indeed in perfect harmony with revelation. So far Eliphaz's conception of God was good and it was right.
 - (2) Second Premise: To bring suffering upon a man without cause is not just.
 - (a) This second premise Eliphaz cannot deduce from the revelation from God. It comes from the confused brain of Eliphaz. He knows only of affliction as a visitation of God for wrong committed. The theory of retribution.
 - (b) From what God said to Satan we surely know that God can bring affliction upon man without a cause on the part of man and still be just.
 - (c) So here we see that Eliphaz did not speak righteously of God. (42:7) Eliphaz accuses God of injustice if Job is not guilty.
 - (3) Conclusion: The man upon whom affliction is brought, is guilty.
 - (a) This, therefore, contains an implied accusation of Job. For Job is afflicted indeed.
 - (b) You notice that because the second premise of Eliphaz is faulty, his conclusion is invalid.
- e. The gentle form Eliphaz uses.
 - (1) Eliphaz does not accuse Job directly. No, he mentions general rules (4:7-8). Who ever perished being innocent? Where are the righteous cut off? Eliphaz could never understand a martyr.
 - (2) Eliphaz suggests what he himself would do. He would seek God in such a case. So he implies gently that he, too, could fall and be punished.
 - (3) He also wishes to arouse hope in Job. He says: If a man only admits his sin then God will turn his affliction. Then better days will come and prosperity. Again, the theory of retribution.

- (4) Eliphaz assumes that material prosperity will follow those who are upright and adversity will come upon evil doers. This he regards as an ultimate principle to which even God must be submissive. On this ultimate principle Job is in perfect agreement. The debate seems to start out then upon the basis on an assumption that not God but a certain principle of ethics is ultimate.
2. Job's reply to Eliphaz, Chs. 6-7 – "Is God my Enemy?"
 - a. Job points to the faulty reasoning by Eliphaz.
 - (1) Eliphaz knows only of suffering caused by sin—Job rejects the accusation of Eliphaz altogether. Job emphatically denies that he is guilty of a special sin because of which the Lord is afflicting him.
 - (2) Job turns the argumentation of Eliphaz around.
 - (a) First Job complains (6:2, 3) of his terrible sufferings. If his affliction were weighed in a balance, it would be heavier than sand. His suffering is appalling, overwhelming.
 - (b) In verse 3 Job says in effect: "Therefore, my words have slipped, my words have been rash." He tries to explain his bad words of chapter 3. Job says that suffering did not come upon him because of special sin, but because of his suffering he allowed his words to slip.
 - b. So Job admits that he sinned.
 - (1) Not the sin of which Eliphaz accused him—no hidden crime. But he admits that he has spoken rashly.
 - (2) But as the affliction of Job goes on we must not be surprised that his words will slip again, especially as his friends get bolder in their accusations of him.
 - (3) Job was led Job to confess that his words had been rash.
 - (4) Job actually turns to God (6:8-10). The fact that he cried to God is important in our study. The content of his prayer is not good. He prays for death and anticipates no joy thereafter. But Job is not afraid to die because he knows he is innocent of the sin of which he has been accused.
3. First Speech of Bildad – Chapter 8 – "Consider the Fathers."
 - a. His theory.
 - (1) First he emphasizes God's justice. Like Eliphaz, Bildad holds God is just in all His dealings with men even when He afflicts.
 - (2) Then he presents his theory of retribution. With Bildad it is a foregone conclusion that the man whom God afflicts is indeed guilty. For, according to Bildad, God sends no affliction without cause.
 - (3) Next, he illustrates his opinion: "Can the rush grow without mire? Can the flag grow without water?" No, indeed! Well, so it is with man who forgets God. Bildad implies that an afflicted man is one who forgot God.
 - b. His appeal.
 - (1) Eliphaz had referred to a revelation which he received in the night. But Bildad had no such experience.
 - (2) Bildad appeals to the tradition of the fathers. Now it is a splendid thing to respect the wisdom of the fathers. But it is a mistake to think all wisdom is in the past and lies with age. It is possible that their opinions might be wrong.
 - c. His method.
 - (1) Bildad is rude. While Eliphaz was speaking rather gently to Job, Bildad hardly constrains himself. He believes Eliphaz has been too easy on Job. He accuses Job of having spoken very windy words. In a rude way he attacks Job.

- (2) Bildad is also very cruel. He tells Job that his children, whom the Lord had taken away, had been killed in their wickedness. The fact that they had been killed was enough for Bildad to draw that conclusion.
- (3) Bildad is also proud. Eliphaz had said to Job: If I were in such a condition I would seek God. He implied that affliction could come upon him. But Bildad says: If you would seek God and repent He would restore you in time. He was not trying to put himself in the place of Job.
- d. His advice:
 - (1) Job must repent, not merely of general sins, but of the hidden sin of which his affliction is the punishment.
 - (2) Bildad promises that if Job would do that, then prosperity and health would return. Still, theory of retribution.
- 4. Job's reply to Bildad – Chs. 9-10 – “God is the adversary!”
 - a. Job begins to praise God (vv. 1-15).
 - (1) Job has meditated on the revelation Eliphaz has mentioned. When Bildad begins to attack Job, Job pays little attention and thinks of the revelation Eliphaz had spoken of.
 - (2) Job begins by admitting that a man is not just with God. He emphasizes the weakness of man and the power of God. When weak man stands in judgment with the strong almighty God, man must of necessity always be the loser.
 - (3) Then Job praises some virtues of God. Says Job: God is wise in heart, there is not one like God. He is mighty in strength. He can shake the earth, command the sun, restrain the stars. He is invisible and unconquerable. Not one can hold out against God.
 - b. Job suddenly shows a relapse (9:16-24).
 - (1) Notice virtues of God Job has been praising: strength, invisibility, and invincible power. In short, he has praised his great power to judge. This was in harmony with the first part of Eliphaz's revelation.
 - (2) Job did not praise the moral virtues of God, holiness and purity. For Job, looking at his affliction without a cause, was not quite ready to admit and praise God's holiness and purity.
 - c. Job complains that he misses an umpire (9:25-35).
 - (1) Job states that in judgment with God he would be loser, for God is stronger than he.
 - (2) Job also says since God, the accuser, is also God, the judge, what hope does he have?
 - (3) Oh, if there were only an Umpire, a Daysman, a mediator between God and me. Then could I plead my case like a man.
 - d. Job falls back into downheartedness (Ch. 10).
 - (1) He complains about his terrible misery. It seems though it will never end.
 - (2) And so Job longs for death again. He longs for the quietness of the grave, from whence nobody ever returns.
 - e. NOTICE: JOB'S THEOLOGY AT THIS STAGE.
 - (1) His knowledge of God was beclouded. Surely he magnified God's greatness and strength. But he has no word of praise for God's holiness and purity and love. **God is strong but is he pure?**
 - (2) His knowledge of a mediator was beclouded. Job feels the need for one. There ought to be one. But there is none.
 - (3) His knowledge of the future is beclouded. The grave seems to be the end. There is no vision of glory beyond the grave. It all seems dark to Job.
 - (4) This condition demands the vision of a mediator:
 - (a) Who would spread light on God's holiness.
 - (b) Who would take care of man's cause.

(c) Who would show man the glory beyond.

5. First speech of Zophar – Ch. 11 – “Shame on you for such talk!”

a. The introduction (vv. 1-6).

- (1) Zophar rudely calls Job names (vv. 2-3). Without any attempt to be considerate Zophar calls Job a talker, a rattler, a liar, and a mocker. But the man neglects to prove his accusations. Zophar is excited, bold and rude. If steam were logic, he would be an Aristotle.
- (2) Zophar scorns the contention of Job (v. 4). Job maintains he is pure in doctrine with respect to his personal suffering, and that he is also clean as to his conduct in the matter under discussion. The three friends hold an opposite opinion.
- (3) Zophar desires God’s intervention (vv. 5-6). He seems to realize that the arguments of the friends are too weak. For they do not silence Job. He expresses the wish that God might reveal his opinion in the case.

b. The body or content of Zophar’s speech (vv. 7-12).

- (1) Zophar magnifies the infinite virtues of God (vv. 7-9). In beautiful words he praises the height and depth and length of God’s infinite perfections. There is no limit to them. Nobody can ever find out the Almighty unto perfection.
- (2) Zophar reminds Job of the infallible judgment of God (v. 10). If God should arrest a man and call him to judgment no one could prevent it. No lawyer could talk right that which was wrong.
- (3) Zophar rebukes Job’s stubborn foolishness (v. 12). With reference to Job Zophar says that before an empty-headed man will have understanding, the colt of a wild ass will turn into a man. Zophar is the least considerate of all three friends.

c. The application (vv. 13-20).

- (1) Zophar urges Job to admit his crime. Zophar follows the same track as his friends. Job just prepares his heart and stretches his hands unto God.
- (2) Zophar admonishes Job to depart from iniquity. He uncharitably takes for granted that not only in Job’s personal life, but also in Job’s house, there is great wickedness.
- (3) Zophar predicts also great prosperity, that is if Job confesses and repents of his sin. Just as his wickedness brought affliction, so godliness will bring prosperity. Same old theory of retribution.
- (4) Zophar threatens Job with destruction of the wicked. Since he holds Job guilty, he expects destruction to come upon Job unless he repents.

NOTE: The three friends have spoken: Eliphaz, the ~~ege~~gete; Bildad, the historian; and Zophar, the dogmatist. But not one of them understands Job’s case.

6. Job’s reply to Zophar – chs. 12–13 – “I have a little sense!”

a. Job is not greatly impressed by the wisdom of his friends.

- (1) First he sarcastically mocks their wisdom. His friends don’t spare him, neither will he them. Says Job: You are the people. You know it all. In you three, wisdom is personified.
- (2) He claims he is not inferior to them. He says naively: What you know, I know too. That does not say much, says Job.
- (3) Job’s problem is this: There is not cause of sin in him for which this great affliction has come upon him. How then can it be in harmony with the true morality that he is afflicted?
- (4) His friends have not even seen his problem. It is their contention, since God only brings affliction as retribution, Job must be guilty. To them, there is no problem except Job’s refusal to see.

- (5) Hence, Job does not care for their wisdom. He advises them to remain silent as long as they know no more than they do.
- b. But I have a little sense too – I see: The wisdom and power of God, the beasts and the birds, all creation declare that God controls all life. He controls all physical nature. Kings, captains, priests and judges are under His control. Nations owe their existence to Him. But the wicked do still prosper in this life while the righteous suffer.
- c. Job appeals to a higher court (13:20-28). Job reasons: Surely when God sees my case in its true light, He will say: “I am sorry, Job. I made a mistake.”
- d. Monologue on transiency of human life (chapter 14).
- (1) In verses 1–6 Job feels it strange that divine justice should fasten upon such a creature as man. His existence is fleeting, troublesome and involved in the universal sinfulness of humanity. Why then must a single individual who is no heinous sinner, incur such a weight of divine displeasure? Cannot God grant the creature of a day a brief breathing-space from trouble?
- (2) In verses 7–12 the fate of things is contrasted with the fate of persons, to the advantage of the former. A felled tree may sprout again, but death writes a “nevermore” on man’s life.
- (3) The gloom of the picture penetrates Job’s spirit so profoundly that there is a dramatic revulsion from it (vv. 13-15). At the present he feels the rod of the God of wrath across his shoulders. Presumably he must bear it while the present life lasts. But after that? He gives expression to a lovely dream of the God of grace granting him asylum in Sheol and remembering his affliction. If I could believe that, says Job, “I could endure my weary post until relief arrived” (14b Moffatt). These are the words of a man who cannot let go of his faith although the present dealings of God are a mystery to him.
- (4) The glory of the dream fades in the recollection of the grim facts of the present (v. 16-22). Job imagines a God who, miser-like, keeps constant check upon every sin (16-17); a God who pulverizes the mightiest works of nature and dashes the hopes of men (18-19). Death is the supreme trump card—man’s divine Antagonist. It makes him unable to rejoice in the rejoicing of children he leaves behind, or to weep with them in their perplexities (21). It does not even mean the cessation of his own pain (22).

NOTE: At the end of the first round, Job still feels that God’s rule is arbitrary and not in accord with justice (12:7-25). Job regards his friends as ill-advised counsellors. He desires to speak with God and to plead with him. This seems to be the first step in advance (13:13). Hitherto, Job has accepted the pagan philosophy of his friends, namely, that in this life the good are rewarded and the evil punished. His own terrible sufferings, however, have caused him to doubt the validity of the principle. Hence he turns on God in bitter complaint. Now, however, he wants to discuss the matter with God which shows both that he begins to recognize in reality that God is greater than he and also that there is justice in God, for he expects God to listen to him. More and more he begins to realize that God is essentially just (13:10-11). Job will prove his ways to God, even before His face. God will slay him, he fears, but he is prepared for that. He will await what God will do, and resigns himself to it, even though it be death. A hypocrite would not thus wish to come before God.

✓ B. Second Cycle of Speeches – Chs. 15-21 – Theme: Fate of a Wicked Man.

1. Eliphaz – Chapter 15 – “Job’s guilt grows greater.”

a. In this speech Eliphaz, no longer considerate, rebukes Job.

- (1) He alleges Job’s guilt (vv. 2-6). He calls Job’s words vain and windy. He says they are hollow and to no advantage. In fact, he things they are damaging in

- that they destroy the fear of God and corrupt prayer.
- (2) He mocks Job's wisdom (vv. 7-12). Job talks as though he is the first man, born before the hills. He says Job speaks as though he sat in counsel with God, as though his was eternal witness.
 - (3) Eliphaz misunderstands Job's contention (vv. 13-16). He speaks as though Job had claimed to be sinless. Job only maintains innocence of great transgression which had caused his great calamity.
 - b. Eliphaz lauds the wisdom of the Fathers (vv. 17-25).
 - (1) Introduction (vv. 17-19). Eliphaz leaves his revelation and gives the opinion of the fathers which he believes will stand in judgment of Job.
 - (2) Body or Content (vv. 20-35). The wicked have no rest, no peace in the heart. The conscience of the wicked man accuses him. The cause of all this is sin. He runs against God with a stiff neck.
 - (3) Application of what the fathers taught.
 - (a) Eliphaz pictures the judgment which comes upon the wicked. He will become poor, walk in darkness, lose his children, reap vanity and die early. It is plain that Job belongs among this kind.
 - (b) Notice this time Eliphaz holds out no hope for Job. He does not say: You must repent and then prosperity will return. It is evident that he considers Job well beyond hope of redemption.
2. Job's second reply to Eliphaz — Chs. 16-17 — "Miserable Comforters!"
- a. Old Tales and Cold Comfort.
 - (1) Instead of comforting him they have hurt him with their speeches. Indeed they are miserable comforters. Job rejects all the theories they have presented for they all have presented nothing but the theory of retribution.
 - (2) So Job says: If you were in my condition I could easily speak to you in the same way. I could also shake my head at your circumstances. But I would not do it. I would then try to comfort you. I would try to strengthen you, to brace you, to assuage your grief.
 - b. Job pictures the greatness of his grief.
 - (1) God has visited him. Surely there is no evil which God does not send. He pictures how God came out against him, took him by the neck, shook him and threw him down. Now he sits in affliction, disease prevents him from wearing decent clothes, causes his eyes to tear continuously and his tears mix with the ashes on which he sits.
 - (2) His enemies gloat over him and his misery. They stand gaping at his affliction. They smite him on the cheekbones with reproach. They rejoice in his misery.
 - c. Job cries for vindication (16:18-17:2).
 - (1) Job calls for a witness, one who will be an avenger of blood. "O earth cover not my blood." Job calls for a witness who is his kin, his neighbor, one who will plead for him after he is dead.
 - (2) Through all of this Job still holds fast his integrity.
 - d. Job's hope of the future is unfirm (Ch. 17).
 - (1) Suddenly he begins to speak about the grave again. He does not seem to look beyond the grave.
 - (2) This is due to his sinking faith again. He has cried for his Daysman, for his salvation, for his witness, but he loses sight of him again.
3. Bildad — Ch. 18 — "The Fate of Mr. Badman."
- a. Introduction (vv. 1-4). Bildad is angry with Job.
 - (1) Bildad is angry because Job continues to speak. There is not end to his words.

- (2) Bildad feels offended by Job. Job has ridiculed the wisdom of his friends. He had decried them as ignorant.
- (3) Bildad holds Job to be arrogant, for Job rejected the theory of retribution which his friends applied to him. Job has spoken as though it could be changed. Bildad says: Sooner shall the earth be unpeopled and the rocks removed than that this old theory be changed.
- b. Note the content of this theory as applied to Job (vv. 5-19).
 - (1) The wicked become ensnared. He shall be without light. In four different phrases Bildad tells Job that the light of the wicked shall be put out.
 - (2) The wicked man shall perish.
 - (a) Calamity desires to devour the wicked.
 - (b) Sickness consumes his body. The first-born of death, leprosy, shall eat away the flesh of the wicked. Bildad could hardly speak plainer.
 - (c) As the last member of his house, he shall be destroyed.
 - (d) His house is left desolate. Strangers and wild animals shall take possession of it.
 - (3) The wicked shall be forgotten.
 - (a) He shall have no posterity. As a tree, his roots shall decay and his branches shall be cut off. The wicked shall have no children nor grandchildren.
 - (b) Even his name shall perish from memory. All this Bildad applies to Job.
- c. Conclusion (vv. 20–21).
 - (1) Everyone shall be astonished at the greatness of the calamity when it comes upon the wicked.
 - (2) The day of retribution is inevitable. His punishment is sure. Bildad applies this, too, to Job.
- 4. Job's second reply to Bildad — Ch. 19 — "Hope in the midst of despair."
 - a. Job reproves his friends for their treatment of him (vv. 1-6).
 - (1) He repeats how they grieve him. In fact, they try to demolish him. They bring him no comfort, only grief.
 - (2) He rebukes them for meddling. Job holds that even if he were guilty, it would be none of their business. Why do they not leave him alone?
 - (3) Once more Job gives his conception of the case. No matter how his friends accuse him, Job maintains his integrity. Indeed God has surrounded him with calamities, but without cause.
 - b. Job complains about his bitter suffering.
 - (1) His suffering is directly caused by God.
 - (a) God lets him cry in vain. Job calls and calls for God, but God does not hear.
 - (b) God has torn him all around. His honor is gone. His crown is taken away. His branches are broken off. A mere stem is left.
 - (c) God treats Job as an enemy. God allows an army to run against him.
 - (2) Suffering is indirectly caused by God.
 - (a) He is forsaken of his brethren. His friends act like strangers. Acquaintances have forgotten him. Servants become disobedient. His wife has forsaken him. Children hoot at him. Intimates avoid him. All those who loved him are turned against him.
 - (b) His disease waxes worse. His skin cleaves to his bones. His flesh is almost gone. He is just a skeleton. His teeth fall out of his mouth. It cannot last much longer. The end must come soon.

- c. Job longs for a true testimony concerning him.
 - (1) In vain he expects it of his friends. He begs for pity, for compassion. But they would rather condemn than comfort. They persecute him like a wild animal.
 - (2) Hence, Job looks elsewhere for testimony. It is his desire that his integrity be written in a book, engraved in a rock and the chiseled groove be filled with lead. Job was not aware that it would be written in a book that withstands the ages, the Bible.
 - d. Job utters a threefold confession, 19:25-27.
 - (1) A confession of faith first (v. 25).
 - (a) "I know." How does he know? Has his condition changed? Not at all. It is worse.
 - (b) "That my redeemer." He speaks of his redeemer, his **goel** (Heb.), avenger of blood, will plead his cause after death. In our context Job is thinking neither of healing nor of resurrection, 25, the King James and Revised Text might suggest. He is concerned with the clearing of his good name and hence, "Vindicator" expresses the sense best. Job, who is not a member of the chosen people and who does not stand in covenant relationship to God, discovers in the furnace of affliction that he has been so bound up with God that he can turn to him and call on him for vindication as a right. This is a turning point in Job's words. This is a climax but not the climax.
 - (c) "My **goel** lives." Job expects to die. Then his blood will lie upon the earth. But Job knows his blood will be avenged. His cause will be pleaded upon the earth. His name will be kept alive.
 - (2) Confession of hope (vv. 25-27a).
 - (a) Job expects to die. There are many symptoms of the approach of death. The germs destroy both his skin and the little flesh that is left. The germs will seem to be victorious over Job's body.
 - (b) But no, Job's **goel** will stand at the latter day upon the earth. The germs are not the last, but the **goel** will be victorious and the conqueror.
 - (c) Job even expects to see God from his flesh after his death. Says he: My eyes shall see it and stranger, as in the case of an avenger of blood. A stranger would see the avenging, but Job with his eyes will see God.
 - (2) Confession of love (27b).
 - (a) My heart (reins, mg.) is consumed within me. The heart or reins is the seat of the affections.
 - (b) Job says his reins or heart is longing for the Redeemer. From the depth of his being, he is consumed with longing, with love for Him.
 - e. Job gives a serious warning to his friends (vv. 28-29).
 - (1) Job's friends have persecuted him because they think that they have found the root of his sufferings in his own sinful nature.
 - (2) Job warns his friends about the results of such false accusations. They will be punished for it.
 - (3) And yet, the root of the matter is in Job. It is after all because of Job's piety that he has been afflicted. This is the opposite of what his friends believe.
5. Zophar — Chapter 20 — "All nature conspires against you."
- a. Zophar's text is the brevity of the wicked man's prosperity and the inevitability of doom—a text equally cruel and irrelevant for Job's case. The text is expounded with power, heat and impetuosity. Once again if steam were logic, he would be the master logician.

- b. Key to Zophar's words – v. 2. "Therefore do my thoughts give answer to me, even by reason of my haste that is in me." Haste can be responsible for an incorrect view of man (cf. Ps. 116:11); and no less for an incorrect or partial view of God. "His haste explains his theology. Had he taken time to observe and reflect, he would have said, 'Some sufferers are saints'; had he taken still more time he might have said 'And some are saviours.'" Strahan.
 - c. Suffering Job appears in a false light as sinning Job. The false light on man comes from a distorted view of God. There is nothing in Zophar's words to suggest that God is anything more than an impatient judge.
6. Job's reply to Zophar – Chapter 21 – "But the wicked do prosper."
- Mr. Badman: Lives to prosperous old age.
 His children flourish after him.
 His death is a sleep.

NOTE: As the second round closes we find Job in the initiative. He is still wrestling with his problems. His friends, however, are trying to salvage some part of their treasured theology from this savage to whom nothing is sacred. It would have been best for them just to leave, but they have one more attempt to make in trying to condemn and justify their theology.

C. Third Cycle of Speeches – Chapters 22-27 – Theme: Sinfulness of Job. Eliphaz accuses Job of terrible sins; Bildad talks in broad generalities; Zophar just raves.

- 1. Eliphaz – Chapter 22 – A list of Job's sins.
 - a. Begins by repeating the main thought of his vision (vv. 2; cf. 4:17-20). When he first told it, it might have seemed to be no more than one of those solemn experiences that color and mold a man's life. Now we see that it became a tyranny that held him as in a strait-jacket. Not merely Job but also God was to be understood in terms of the vision. This is the ultimate fate of all those who insist on interpreting God in terms of experience only.
 - b. The reason for suffering (vv. 1-5).
 - (1) The key cannot be found in God, since human morality cannot effect His almighty power.
 - (2) The explanation must be sought, therefore, in man. Is Job being punished for piety? Inconceivable. Then he must be paying for his wickedness.
 - c. Job is openly accused – A list of his supposed sins – all social evils of which Job is innocent (vv. 6-20). None of Eliphaz's characteristic mildness and gentleness is seen in these verses.
 - d. An invitation to repent and return to God (vv. 21-30).
 - (1) The mild spirit of Eliphaz breaks through the fire and brimstone preaching, in a passage full of beauty and spiritual truth, when it is lifted out of its narrow application to Job.
 - (2) Man finds authentic peace, not in his sins but through the forgiveness of them (21, 23); through acceptance of the truth revealed by God (22); through a new judgment of values whereby the preciousness of divine treasures eclipses all else (24-25). Such peace will bring with it joy (26), communion with God (27), triumph and usefulness to others (28-30).
- 2. Job's third answer of Eliphaz – Chapters 23-24 – "Where is God?"
 - a. Job lays his heart bare (23). Job is not a rebel; he does not complain for the sheer joy of complaining, but he attempts to see God as a God of mercy. But wonders if he is not arbitrary in his dealings with man.
 - b. The providence of God (24).
 - (1) This problem is considered in a world setting. Various classes of wrong-doers are mentioned. Why does not God intervene? Notice Moffatt on verse 1, "Why has not the Almighty sessions of set justice? Why do his followers

- never see him intervening?"
- (2) Verses 5-8 describe aboriginals, driven into the wilderness by the oppression of a stronger race.
 - (3) Verses 10-11 depict wretched labourers working for an inadequate wage, hungry and thirsty in the midst of plenty.
 - (4) Verses 13-17 describe the nefarious doings of the murderer (14), the adulterer (15), and the robber (16). Notice the RSV rendering of verse 17, "For they know the terrors of the shadow of death." There is in the verse a contrast between the attitude of respectable people and that of the night birds. The former dread the darkness with its unknown terrors; the latter "love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil."
 - (5) Verses 18-21 cannot express Job's own contentions. Notice margin "ye say." The friends' reasoning is recognizable in the passage.
 - (6) In all of this Job simply shows again that in spite of their arguments in this life the wicked are allowed to prosper. Thus their theory of retribution breaks down in experience.
3. Bildad – Chapter 25 – "God is too great to do evil." Bildad passes over Job's argument in silence, and strives to bring him to his knees before the greatness of Jehovah. When the mightiest heavenly bodies tremble before Him, subdued and convicted, how can insignificant and corrupt man hope to look up, unafraid of what the light may disclose? There is point in this speech. But it is all beside the point since Job is not an unrighteous man.
 4. Job's third reply to Bildad – Chapters 26–27:12 – "My conscience is clear."
 - a. Job demonstrates that he understand full well what Bildad had said about the might of God. His controversy with him and with the others cannot be explained by failure to stand where they stand in appreciation of the omnipotence of God; it must rather be explained by his honesty in facing certain puzzling facts of experiences which they have either overlooked or suppressed.
 - b. Rebukes his friends for not comforting him, then reiterates and defends his integrity.
 5. Zophar – Chapter 27:13-23 – "The portion of a wicked man with God."
 - a. A pointed reference to Job, 27:13-15. He is being punished for his great wickedness.
 - b. This speech is not even dignified by a reply. It demonstrates the despair to which the words of Job have driven his friends.

NOTE: Third round ends in inevitable confusion. The confusion that must arise when orthodoxy turns its back on experience and creates a world to fit its theories, and when experience ignores revelation and seeks to make itself the measure of truth.

III. Interlude: In Praise of Wisdom – Chapter 28.

- A. Mining for wisdom as one would mine for gold but it cannot be discovered that way.
- B. Answer is with the Lord, v. 28. To man God has told this much, that wisdom is fearing the Lord. Here lies discernment, in refusing the evil path (v. 28 know – Moffatt). For the wise this is commonplace and self-evident fact (Cf. Prov. 1:7; 3:7; 9:10; 14; 15:33; 16:6; Eccl. 12:13), but sometimes we are very apt to forget the commonplace. Neither Job's friends nor Job had been particularly concerned with the fear of the Lord. Self-vindication, the vindication of orthodoxy, yes, but no one had "laid his hand upon his mouth" (40:2) and listened to what God had to say. In their zeal for orthodoxy, for **their** conception of God, Job's friends had gone far down the evil path, while they slandered him. Now the curtain goes up on the second part of the drama, and we are to see whether they can find true wisdom in spite of their disastrous start.

IV. Job's Closing Monologue – Chapters 29-31 – "Challenge to God to Consider His Need."

- A. Pictures former condition of happiness – Ch. 29.

1. He was a God-preserved man (2-4). Here we have the pathos of the whole book. At the heart of his past happiness was the conviction that God was watching over him. His present misery is explained by the feeling that God is no longer watching—or if watching, with unreasonably critical eyes.
 2. Job was a domestically happy man (5).
 3. Job was a prosperous man (6).
 4. He was a universally respected man (7-10, 21-25). When he took his seat as a city councillor it was noted with respect by all classes of the community. His opinion was waited upon with respect. When it had been expressed there was nothing more to say. His speech was like refreshing rain for dropping spirits.
- B. The contempt into which he has been brought – Ch. 30— “But Now” used three times:
1. Now he is hated – v. 1.
 2. Now he is tortured by disease – v. 9.
 3. Now instead of fellowship with God he has been cut off – v. 16. Cf. vv. 19, 26, 29. His bitter complaint is that God will not hear his case, vv. 20-21.
- C. The Oath of Clearance – Chapter 31 – Six main claims:
1. Untainted by immorality (1-12).
 2. Untainted by thoughtlessness (13-22, 31, 32).
 3. Untainted by covetousness (24-25).
 4. Untainted by any secret hankering after idols (26-27).
 5. Untainted by bitterness toward his enemies (29-30).
 6. Untainted by insincerity (33-34).
 7. Therefore let heaven or earth convict me of sin, cries Job (35-40). (Notice the use of “if”).

THE WORDS OF JOB ARE ENDED

V. Elihu – Chapters 32-35 – “The Angry Young Man.”

- A. The introduction of Elihu in prose (32:2-5) indicates that a new element is being introduced. He is given a brief genealogy, something that is lacking in the case of Job and his friends. As was stressed at the beginning of this study, Job and his friends are introduced, irrespective of whether they were of good family or not, as representatives of the Wise. Their position in society rested on their own merits, not on those of their fathers. Elihu, however, is introduced as a young man and his father and family line is mentioned.
- B. The Wise were not godless men; their goal was their understanding the divine rule of the world, that they might direct their own and their pupils’ footsteps accordingly. But they believed God had given them the proper start—for Eliphaz it was religious experience; for Bildad, the voice of tradition; for Zophar, sound common sense. Their own reason was ample, they thought, and would bring them to their goal. Elihu challenges this with the claim of inspiration (32:8). Without a doubt Elihu stands on firmer ground than the three friends. With one burning phrase he had laid bare the inner weakness of those who have spoken before him. Human reason cannot grasp the depths of God’s work in heaven and on earth (Cf. 28:20-28), but the sequel is to show that Elihu’s claim to inspiration is as shallow as the three friends’ claim to divine wisdom.
- C. Elihu presents a phenomenon we constantly meet in life. The self-satisfaction of an older generation finally drives young men to revolt. In practice they seldom say much that is new and seldom say it well, but they are almost invariably glimpses of valuable truth which the older generation had missed to its loss.
- D. Elihu is angry – 32:1-5.
- E. Elihu is conceited – 32:10; 17-20; 33:3-7; 31-33.
- F. Elihu’s two accusations:
1. To three friends – they had failed to answer Job – 32:6-22.
 2. To Job – he had tried to justify himself against God – 34:5-9.

- G. Although most of what Elihu has to say is just repetition of the others (and for that reason we are not outlining it here), there are occasional flashes of real insight.
1. **The Disciplinary Value of Suffering** — 36:8-10, 15; 33:19, 29-30. Cf. 23:10 (Job) and 5:17-18 (Eliphaz). For children of God the purpose of life is not pleasure, but growth in Christlikeness. It is not what we meet in life, but how we meet that counts eternally. This, however, is not automatic, suffering only brings value to those who are exercised thereby — Heb. 12:11. Cf. James 1:2-4, 12.
 2. **God in Nature** — 37:5-14, 23-24 (The last is a pointed reference to Job). The book of Job pictures God in the natural, not the supernatural. Cf. 12:7-10.
 3. **Practical Values of Adversity** — “Why should suffering come to those who are good?”
 - a. Friends’ answer—punishment because of sin. But we have seen this break down in experience. Cf. John 16:33; 2 Tim. 3:12.
 - b. **One implication of the book:** The innocent must suffer lest people be righteous only to avoid suffering. Goodness cannot be used as protection against disease or earthquake. This was the assumption with which Satan began the drama, and Job suffers to prove that men will serve God and live godly lives for other than selfish motives.
 - c. We have also seen that suffering has disciplinary value strengthening our moral fiber, like gold is refined by fire.
 - d. It opens springs of compassion in our hearts, that we may bring comfort to others in sorrow.
 - e. It shows our need for God when our own self-sufficiency is lost in pain and trouble.
 - f. It shows the necessity of life after death if our present life with all its temptations and suffering is to have any real significance at all.
 4. Suffering reveals God’s love. This is Elihu’s most important contribution to the problem. His teaching that our suffering is not caused by God’s anger, but by His goodness; that affliction is often God’s way of protecting His children from worse evil and leading them to new heights of divine fellowship. Cf. Heb. 12:5-22; I Peter 4:12-14; Psalms 94:12; Col. 1:24; Rev. 3:19.
 5. These practical uses of adversity are not answers to the whole of this great problem, but they give hints of the deep meaning of loss in our own lives and can teach us patient submission to the will of Him whose eternal love can be revealed through every experience of our lives.

VI. The Voice Out of the Whirlwind — Chapters 38:42-46 — “Job examined by Jehovah.”

- A. Job had desired to take his case before God — 13:15, 18, 22, 24; 23:3-7; 31:35.
- B. His friends had thought, “If only God were here, He would side with us and show Job up as a hypocrite and a scoundrel.”
- C. Both sides have cried, “If only God were here, He would settle the argument and answer the basic question, ‘Why?’”
- D. The argument has been completed. All that human wisdom can say on the subject has been expressed. Now comes the whirlwind out of which God speaks.
- E. As we read these chapters we see something quite unexpected. God says none of the things we expect of Him. There is not one word spoken directly about the problem which has been under consideration for the last 36 chapters. He does not mention the meaning of suffering. He does not refer to what took place between Himself and Satan in the heavenly courts. He does not refer to Job’s dream of life after death or to his vision of a redeemer. He reveals no deep secret which will unravel the mystery of God’s way with His world.
- F. Jehovah Quizzes Job — The Questionnaire — 38—30:3.
 1. What about the inanimate world, Job?
 - a. What holds up the world?
 - b. Who decided how big the world would be?

- c. Who determined where the sea shall stop and the land begin?
- d. Can you make morning come when you are ready?
- e. Do you cause the day to end and the night to draw near?
- f. Can you make thunder or lightning, or cause the wind to blow in any direction you desire?
- g. Can you bring dew to the earth or frost?
- h. Can you change the stars in the sky or re-arrange the constellations?
- i. Do you know where the snow is kept (or how much it is worth)?
- 2. Well then, what about the animal world, Job?
 - a. Do you understand how the animals of the wilderness regulate their lives?
 - b. Can you feed the lion and the raven?
 - c. Do you know how the mountain goats breed?
 - d. Can you point out the dwelling place of the wild ass?
 - e. Did you adorn the peacock with his fine feathers?
 - f. Do you regulate the life of the ostrich and the stork?
 - g. Do you give the war horse his great strength?
 - h. Do the hawk and the eagle fly at your command?

NOTE: An observation concerning this questionnaire.

- a. The Lord does not touch upon His control of the moral world, the real cause of Job's problem. He does not say one word about the problem of suffering, or retribution, of chastisement. He does not speak of suffering for righteousness sake.
- b. The Lord speaks only about His supernatural perfection which is revealed in His creation and providence. He indicates that He is exalted above all creatures. He shows His great power and infinite wisdom.
- c. There are great lessons here which will help us to solve the problem of suffering. For just as God is exalted far above the powers of nature in His might and wisdom, so He is also exalted above the moral world which He controls and rules. The Creator and Provider is also the Redeemer. He does not have to give an account to any of His creatures.
- d. God is not teaching Job natural history, but rather giving him insight into the greatness of the Almighty.
- G. Job's reply to God — 40:2-5 — "Keep silent before Jehovah."
 - 1. Job is required to give an answer. It seems that he planned to be silent; but he cannot. One who quarrels with the Almighty must also answer God's questions.
 - 2. What answer does Job give? He feels that he is very insignificant in the presence of Jehovah. God is so high, what can he answer? He will lay his hand upon his mouth. He has spoken against God before; he will not do so again.
 - 3. Job's answer is insufficient. Job is lacking in the fact that he is willing to recognize the sovereignty and the wise rule of God in the natural world, for he cannot deny the fact against such overwhelming arguments. But he does not humble himself before God and confess the perfections of God's being in the moral world. So in essence he has not changed as yet.
 - 4. It is good that Job is silent and that he does not contradict God, but that he is silent and does not confess his sin is not good. He must speak, but his words must be a confession of sin.
- H. Jehovah's Second Message to Job — 40:6—41:34 — "Job's True Sin."
 - 1. Job's reply had been purely negative, far from repentance. He is ready to keep silent before Jehovah, but as yet he has revealed no readiness to submit his stubborn will to God's control.

2. Pivotal passage — 40:8 — Here is Job's true sin. In insisting on his own righteousness, Job indicted the justice and goodness of God because he wouldn't completely let go of his old theology.
3. God asks Job if he is equal with God; if Job has an arm as strong as God's, if he can also thunder with his voice.
4. The Lord offers Job the reins of the world. In this way he can show that he can rule the world better than God and correct all of God's mistakes.
 - a. To do this, Job must adorn himself with divine power. He must be clothed with majesty and glory.
 - b. Then Job must sit in judgment. Then he can judge men fairly, punish the wicked, destroy the godless and humble the proud. He must judge without respect of persons, but he must judge himself first.
5. He must test his power on two animals.
 - a. Behemoth. In striking words God pictures the strength and the power of this great animal, possibly the hippopotamus. This is an example of God's work.
 - b. Leviathan. Who can draw him with a hook or spear? Can you coax him with friendly words? Actually, man is powerless against him.

NOTE: According to the legends of the day of Job, Behemoth and Leviathan were the two great beasts of the ancient chaos ("waste and void" and "darkness"), before the Spirit of God was put to work to bring order out of chaos. If that be the interpretation here, then the lesson is especially powerful. If God could bring a universe of order out of the chaotic mass mentioned in Gen. 1:2, surely He can bring a life of order out of what Job considered to be chaos.

6. From this the Lord draws His conclusions.
 - a. Who is he that dares to place himself before God and speak of judging God? Can this be done by one who cannot even call animals to judgment?
 - b. The Lord must always be the first. Even piety and uprightness of heart is a gift of the Lord. From God comes also the gift of a mediator.
 - c. Everything under heaven is Mine, says God. God is Master and Lord of all things. He is Sovereign owner of all. He can do all things as He pleases. He does not have to give an account of what He is doing. Here lies the secret of the problem of suffering, and all other problems.
- I. Job's Repentance — 42:1-6.
 1. The first thing revealed by Job's answer is his new estimate of God. His previous knowledge of God was mere hearsay but now he knows by his own experience God's matchless glory and care.
 2. Even more important, he is absolutely certain of God's righteousness. Job is beginning to see, not the God of the popular theology of the day with all its limitations and misconceptions, but God as he really is, infinitely greater in every way than man imagined him. Job does not know all the answers, but now he knows the God who has all things under His loving care.
 3. Job's confession — 42:3-6. He is repenting, not of the crimes his friends had emphasized, but of the basic sin of all, rebellion against God.
 - a. Job acknowledges God's wise power. His plans are never foiled.
 - b. Job confesses his own folly. The words which God used are an irony, Job now takes to himself. I shall ask and Thou shalt instruct me. He desires to be led deeper into God's knowledge and wisdom.
 - c. He rejoices in a deeper knowledge of God. He not only hears, but he sees.
 - d. He humbles himself in dust and ashes. He does not now come before God as a prince, but as a worm. He is not longer a judge, but one who is willing to accept the judgment of God.
 - e. He is ready to be restored. Herein lies the solution of the problem of suffering.

It is not that the Lord answers every question, or that He tells us the “Why?” of our suffering. This is often a matter of pride. But the humbled soul is ready to say, I do not know why. I cannot trace His hand, but I do know my God, and I know that He will make it all turn out for the good. This is the consistent answer of the entire Bible.

- f. The fact is established that the innocent do suffer, but this is due not to God’s carelessness or to His evil purpose. It is a manifestation of His wisdom and power.

VII. The Restoration of Job — 42:7-16 — “Happily Ever After.”

- A. God’s instruction to the three friends, vv. 8-9, “Go to Job and offer a sacrifice and Job will pray for you. I will hear him but not you.”
- B. Job prays for his friends and Jehovah restores his prosperity twofold. It is as James said, “Behold we call them blessed that endured: ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, how that the Lord is full of pity and merciful.”

CONCLUSION: Job is now ready to live, not by his own integrity and righteousness, but by faith in the eternal purposes of God. Job has found what he really needs—not an answer to his question—but trust in God. The basic purpose of the book is to call on all men to accept by faith the purpose of God. The appearance of men to counsel Job led to controversy, disillusionment and despair; the appearance of God led to submission, faith and courage. The word of man was unable to penetrate the darkness of Job’s mind; the word of God brought abiding fruit. Jehovah did not answer any of the burning questions that are debated in the book; but he answered the need of Job’s heart. He did not explain each phase of the battle; but He made Job “more than conqueror” in it. The book takes its place in the testimony of the ages that there is a blank in the human heart that Jesus alone can fill.

The cry of man’s anguish went up to God,
“Lord, take away pain!
The shadow that darkens the world thou has made;
The close, coiling chain
That strangles the heart; the burden that weighs
On wings that would soar —
Lord, take away pain from the world Thou has made
That it love Thee the more!”

Then answered the Lord to the cry of the world,
“Shall I take away pain,
And with it the power of the soul to endure,
Made strong by the strain?
Shall I take away pity that knits heart to heart,
And sacrifice high?
Will ye lose all your heroes that lift from the fire
White brows to the sky?
Shall I take away love that redeems with a price,
And smiles with your loss?
Can ye spare from your lives that would cling unto Mine
The Christ on His Cross?”

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THEME: Date and Authorship of Job

By

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OUTLINE

I. Introduction.

II. Evidences for date of Job's life.

A. External

1. Silence of scripture
2. Tradition
3. Lack of Jewish rites

B. Internal

1. Worship and conduct
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III. Evidence for Authorship and Composition

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