



THE BOOK OF JOB An Overview

The life of Job is a study of undeserved suffering, testing, the angelic conflict, faithfulness, steadfastness, endurance, giving advice, and receiving rewards. In this fascinating Book the greatest believer of his day passes two monstrous tests, is brutally criticized by his friends, becomes depressed and critical, never curses God, and in the end is doubly blessed by God. The Book of Job is full of application for us today and is an absolute must if we are to understand and pass the unpleasant tests we all face in this life.

OUTLINE

God Tests Job

(prose, chapters 1–2)

- loss of his children, possessions, and health
- he passes the test

Heated Dialogues between Job and his Friends

(poetry, chapters 3–37)

- accusations from his friends
- Job falters

God Confronts Job

(poetry, chapters 38:1–42:6)

- Job confesses and repents

God Vindicates and Blesses Job Twofold

(prose, chapter 42:7–17)

- God rebukes his friends
- Job's children, possessions, and health are restored

- verses 7–17 are a short Epilogue (195 Hebrew words)
- unexpected change from poetry to prose
- one surprise after another
- completes the story
- lots of application
- book opens (2x) and closes (4x) with God calling Job "My servant"

TWO TESTS

Chapters 1–2

- Job is a very mature believer (1:1, 8; 2:3a)
- this is not a test of a baby or carnal believer

- Job is a very rich man (1:2–3)
- this is not a test of a poor or middle class Uzite

- there are two tests in the Book of Job: a financial test (1:13–22) and a health test (2:7–10)
- both tests originate from accusations by Satan—the accuser of the brethren (1:9–11; 2:4–5)
- the accusations are: “People love you God only because you protect their families, finances, and health” (1:11; 2:5)

- *important principle*: Satan cannot touch (remove) our families, finances, or health without God's permission (1:11–12; 2:5–6)

- Satan asked God to remove Job's wealth and health:
 - “put forth Thy hand now and touch” (1:11)
 - “put forth Thy hand, now, and touch” (2:5)
- and God gave permission to Satan to remove Job's wealth and health:
 - “...is in your power” (1:12)
 - “...is in your power” (2:6)

- the nature and extent of the test (its severity) are clearly defined by God
- restraints are put on Satan: he can only do what God allows

- God limited the first test to Job's possessions—excluding his health:
 - permission*: “all that he has is in your power” (1:12b)
 - denial*: “only do not put forth your hand on him” (1:12c)

- God limited the second test to his health—excluding his death
 - permission*: “he is in your power” (2:6b)
 - denial*: “only spare his life” (2:6c)

- it was impossible for Job to die in this test unless Satan disobeyed God—something he will not do for fear of incarceration in the abyss (cf. Luke 8:31)
- Satan was given freedom of choice to do anything he wanted to Job—within predefined limits
- the means of loss (bandits, storm) and the type of disease were left entirely up to Satan

- Satan can strip you of your wealth in seconds: note the thrice repeated “while he was still speaking” (1:16, 17, 18)

- God took the blame for what happened to Job: “you incited me against him, to swallow him up without a cause” (2:3)

- Job passed both tests (1:20–22; 2:10)
 - 1:20–22 shows his attitude toward material possessions

- and 2:10 shows his attitude toward his health (not his possessions)
- in effect he said, "I love God more than my possessions or my health!"
- expect temptations to sin—even from people close to you (2:9)
- a test of Job was also a test of his wife
- she, not Job, had the bad attitude in testing that Satan predicted: "Curse God and die!"
- she was not a mature believer like Job
- she loved possessions and social status more than she loved God
- *principle*: great believers pass the hardest tests:
Job was the greatest believer of his day ("there is no one like him on the earth" 1:8; 2:3) and he passed two brutal back-to-back tests
- the greater you are spiritually the harder the tests you can pass
- God blessed Job twofold when the tests were over (42:10, 12)
- God ruined him without cause (2:3) and then made it up to him twofold

THE DIALOGUES

Job 3–37

Eliphaz

- oldest (15:10)
- most influential
- speaks first
- 3 speeches (4–5, 15, 22)
- other speeches echo his
- clearer reasoning
- represents the others
- promised power of intercession for sinners if he repents (22:26–30)

Bildad

- 3 speeches (8, 18, 25)
- a traditionalist (8:8–10)

Zophar

- 2 speeches (11, 20)
- least tactful, blunt, harsh, brutal, least mature
- arouses Job's anger more than the others—and a withering reply

False Doctrine

- all suffering is caused by sin
- *prosperity gospel*: those who are right with God will not suffer but have unbroken health, wealth, and happiness (4:6–8)
- your children were judged for their sins (8:4)
- all will be restored upon confession and repentance (22:21–30)

- they were poor counselors (5:8; 13:4b)
- Job accused them of false doctrine (13:7) and predicted their discipline (13:9–12; 19:28–29)

Judging Job Wrongly

- they presumed to know why Job was suffering
- all three accused Job of sin without any supporting evidence
- Job was accused of great wickedness and sins without number by Eliphaz (22:4–5)
- Job was accused of committing crimes by Eliphaz (22:6–11)
- he was accused of theft (20:15, 21) and oppressing the poor (20:19) by Zophar
- they smeared Job with lies (13:4a)
- false accusations were cruel treatment of an innocent victim (19:1–6, 22)
- Zohar: your punishment is less than you deserve (11:6)
- they were not comforters (6:14–20; 21:34; 26:2–4)

Job's Defense

- he maintained his innocence (23:11–12; 27:3–6; 32:1; 33:9; 34:5–6)
- he had high moral standards (31:1, 9–12)
- he did good works (29:12–17; 31:13–23, 31–32)
- he confessed his sins regularly (31:33)
- he repeatedly cries for a hearing before God (9:32–33; 13:3; 23:3–7; 31:35–37)

Job Falters

- he is guilty of bitterness, complaining, impatience, doubts, self-pity, irreverence, and an angry tirade (3:1–26; 7:11; 9:22–35; 10:1)
- Job vacillates between faith and despair (compare 6:10 with 10:2, 7, 15–22; 19:7–22)
- he reaches sublime heights in his darkest hour (13:15; 19:25–27; 23:10)

Elihu

- he is much younger (32:4, 6–9)
- he was Abraham's nephew (compare 32:2 with Genesis 22:21)
- Elihu arrived on the scene later
- he makes 4 speeches (32–33; 34, 35, 36–37)
- Elihu dealt more mercifully with Job
- he made no false accusations
- Elihu rightly judged and rebuked Job for his pride and insubordination (33:8–13; 34:9, 35–37; 35:16)
- Elihu refutes the doctrine of proportionate sin and suffering—suffering also encourages obedience and growth (33:14–33; 36:8–11)
- he prepares Job to meet God (37:14–24)

JOB'S CHARACTER

Job 29

Immediate Context

- A. Job's Call for Vindication (chs. 29–31)
1. His past honor and blessing (ch. 29)
 2. His present dishonor and suffering (ch. 30)
 3. His protestations of innocence and final oath (ch. 31)
- (NIV Study Bible, 733)

- this is Job's last speech (chapters 29–31)
- it's like a lawyer submitting his final brief in court—a three-part summation of his case:
 - (1) he reviewed the past blessings he enjoyed (his happiness, wealth, and honor) and the reasons for them (29), and
 - (2) he bemoaned his present miseries—his loss of everything, especially his honor (30),
 - (3) he pronounced an oath of innocence (31)
- he accused God of being cruel to him and treating him unjustly (30:20–24)
- Job is making one last plea for God to hear him in court (31:35–37)

Job's Past Honor and Blessing Chapter 29

- Job longs for his former days of prosperity and happiness (29:1–11) and then spells out the reasons why he received those blessings (29:12–25)
- chapter 29 is an example of inverted parallelism (with a reversed ending to emphasize honor, the most important thing in a pride-shame culture):
 - A. blessing (vv. 2–6)
 - B. honor (vv. 7–10)
 - C. benevolence—reasons why he was blessed (vv. 11–17)
 - B'. blessing (vv. 18–20)
 - A'. honor (vv. 21–25)

And Job again took up his discourse and said,
 "Oh that I were as in months gone by,
 As in the days when God watched over me (29:1–2);

- several months have passed since Job's test began
- he regrets most his loss of fellowship with God (he mentions it first)
- he has lost *his hedge of protection* (cf. 1:10–12)

When His lamp shone over my head,
 And by His light I walked through darkness (29:3);

- he has lost *God's help* (pictured as an oil lamp being held by God over his head to provide light in the surrounding darkness)
- he has lost *divine guidance* (the light from the oil lamp is no longer present and he now walks in darkness)

As I was in the prime of my days,
When the friendship of God was over my tent (29:4);

- he thinks he has lost his *fellowship* with God (friendship, intimate companionship)
- the literal Hebrew is ‘when God was an intimate in my tent’ — as were the three heavenly visitors who came to Abraham’s tent in Genesis 18:1–16

When the Almighty was yet with me,
And my children were around me (29:5);

- he has lost *God’s presence*: he feels *abandoned and forsaken by God*—God has left him (29:5a)
- his seven sons and three daughters are now dead (1:2, 18–19)
- in his mind he has lost his children *and* God
- only his wife remains

When my steps were bathed in butter,
And the rock poured out for me streams of oil! (29:6)

- he has lost his former *prosperity*—his blessings from God
- butter and olive oil are symbols of plenty: cream and butter came from his many cows, and oil from his olive presses poured out like streams

B. honor (vv. 7–10)

“When I went out to the gate of the city,
When I took my seat in the square (29:7);

- Job was one of the elders of the city—a local judge who helped conduct public business

The young men saw me and hid themselves,
And the old men arose and stood.
The princes stopped talking,
And put their hands on their mouths (29:8–9);

- he was so respected that everyone stopped talking when he entered the courtroom
- he was larger than life—as if Bill Gates suddenly entered the room
- he was the wealthiest man in the East

The voice of the nobles was hushed,
And their tongue stuck to their palate.
“For when the ear heard, it called me blessed;
And when the eye saw, it gave witness of me (29:10–11),

- the city officials listened intently to him and praised his opinions when he spoke in the gates
- he spoke with great wisdom

C. benevolence—reasons why Job was blessed (vv. 11–17)

Because I delivered the poor who cried for help,
And the orphan who had no helper (29:12),

- he was fair to all and refused to take bribes
- the poor received justice when they cried for help to the elders in the gates: Job spoke in their defense
- he defended orphans
- God instructs us to help one another: to deliver the poor who cry out for help (עָרַע "cry out for help") and orphans who have no helper (עֲזָרָה "helper") (Job 29:12)

“The blessing of the one ready to perish came upon me,
And I made the widow’s heart sing for joy (29:13).

- he also gave financial assistance to the poor, orphans, and widows

“I put on righteousness, and it clothed me;
My justice was like a robe and a turban (29:14).

- Job’s righteousness and justice in court was apparent to all—like his robe and turban

“I was eyes to the blind,
And feet to the lame (29:15);

- he helped the handicapped—perhaps by providing financial assistance for the blind to hire a guide and the lame to hire transportation

“I was a father to the needy,
And I investigated the case which I did not know (29:16);

- he provided money for the needy as if they were his children and he their father
- he provided justice for people who were complete strangers to him

“And I broke the jaws of the wicked,
And snatched the prey from his teeth (29:17).

- he punished oppressors and provided justice and financial assistance to the oppressed

B’. blessing (vv. 18–20)

“Then I thought, ‘I shall die in my nest,
And I shall multiply my days as the sand (29:18).

- because he was so fair and just, he thought he’d have a long life and die at home with his children around him

‘My root is spread out to the waters,
And dew lies all night on my branch (29:19).

- he thought he’d enjoy prosperity to the end of his life (two figures of prosperity here):
(1) roots that have ample water feed healthy and productive trees (cf. Psalm 1:3)
(2) low-growing vines are mostly watered by dew in Palestine: dew lying all night on the branches means plenty of water and plenty of grapes

‘My glory is ever new with me,
And my bow is renewed in my hand’ (29:20).

- he thought he’d have his glory (weight, prestige) and strength (renewed bow) until the end of his life
- “glory” leads to the last section of this inverted parallelism: his honor (verses 21–24)

A’. honor (vv. 21–25)

“To me they listened and waited,
And kept silent for my counsel (29:21).

- Job was highly respected by those he counseled (a striking contrast with the disrespect of his three friends)

“After my words they did not speak again,
And my speech dropped on them (29:22).

- they had nothing more to say because the wisdom of his advice was so fitting and obvious

“And they waited for me as for the rain,
And opened their mouth as for the spring rain (29:23).

- the elders eagerly anticipated his counsel as struggling crops eagerly wait for the spring rains

“I smiled on them when they did not believe,
And the light of my face they did not cast down (29:24).

- he had faith and answers in hard times, smiled, and was not made despondent by the despondency of the elders
- they couldn't believe it

"I chose a way for them and sat as chief,
And dwelt as a king among the troops,
As one who comforted the mourners (29:25).

- the elders looked to him for leadership and willingly followed him
- his word was to them like that of a chief or king

MY SERVANT JOB

Job 42:7–10

God Confronts Job

- Job is sternly rebuked by God (38:1–42:6)
- Job enters a wisdom contest with God and he can't answer a single question
- submission, confession, and repentance
- forgiven
- Job never renounced or cursed God
- he never questioned God's sovereignty or wisdom
- he finally gets his hearing before God

God's Wrath

- toward his three friends for their bad counsel and false doctrine (much of their doctrine was true)
- for a constant barrage of unsupported accusations
- for judging wrongly
- for further devastating Job
- for inadvertently aiding Satan

God Rebukes Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar (Job 42:7–9)

- Elihu was not rebuked: "Will it be well when He examines you?" (13:9)
- *an unexpected reversal*: God was angry with them, not Job
- *delightful irony*: they needed Job's spiritual resources to defer their discipline, yet they thought Job had none
- God vindicated Job

Job's Mediation

- removal of their discipline was conditioned upon blood sacrifice and intercession
- God demanded an expensive burnt offering of 7 bulls and 7 rams
- Job was the officiating priest (cf. 1:5)
- they will be disciplined according to their folly if there is no mediation
- Job forgave, prayed, and offered sacrifice for his friends
- God forgave him and he forgave them
- *poetic justice*: Job interceded for Eliphaz (cf. 22:26–30)

- God accepted their sacrifice and Job's prayer
- *a happy ending*: all are reconciled to each other

Restoration and Blessing (Job 42:10–17)

- this restitution took place after Job's intercession for his friends
- a restoration of his children, possessions, health, and social status
- literal Hebrew: "the LORD turned the captivity of Job" (42:10b)
- God gave multiple restitution to Job for theft (cf. Exodus 22:4)
- this is double blessing—a reward for passing two monstrous tests
- *a happy ending*: Job lived happily ever after (42:16–17)