

The Story of Job

What do you know about Job?

The Book of Job Summary

The book of Job is Narrative History. Its author is unknown yet it is possible that Job himself wrote it. It is possible that Job is the oldest of any book of the Bible written approximately 2100-1800 B.C. Key personalities of this book include Job, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, Zophar the Naamathite, and Elihu the Buzite.

In Job, we see a man who God allows to be directly attacked by Satan. He is an example of faithfulness as he loses everything important to him yet remains faithful to God. Its purpose is to illustrate God's sovereignty and faithfulness during a time of great suffering.

- In chapters 1-3, God tests Job's faithfulness through allowing Satan to attack him. God told Satan, *"Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him"* (1:12). Through Job's trials, all is lost including his health, his wife even tells him to curse God and commit suicide, but he remains strong and faithful, *"Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God."* (1:22).
- From chapters 4-37, Job's friends give him plenty of bad advice, in rounds of discussion. They mistakenly blame his sufferings on his personal sins rather than God testing and growing Job. One of them was half-correct in that God wanted to humble him, but this was only a part of God's test.
- In chapters 38-42, God speaks to Job and restores him. God knows that Job has received incorrect guidance from his friends, *"Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?"* God fittingly declares that humans do not know everything. Then He humbles Job by asking a series of questions that could never be answered by anyone other than Almighty God; for example, *"Have you understood the expanse of the earth? Tell Me, if you know all this"*. God then brings him to an understanding that believers don't always know what God is doing in their lives.

In the end, Job answers God by saying, *"I have declared that which I did not understand"*. God then blessed Job with twice as much as he had before his trials began.

Based on this quick summary of Job, what stands out the most?

The Story of Job in Greater Detail

Job begins by telling us there is a wealthy man named Job residing in an area called Uz with his extended family and vast flocks. He is “blameless” and “upright,” constantly mindful to live in a righteous manner (Job 1:1). God brags to Satan about Job’s virtue (1:8), but Satan contends that Job is only righteous because God has favored him generously (1:9-10). Satan dares God that, if given the approval to inflict suffering, Job will change and curse God (1:11). God permits Satan to abuse Job to experiment with this brazen claim, but he forbids Satan to take Job’s life in the manner (1:12).

Over the time of one day, Job is given four reports, each informing him that his sheep, servants, and ten children have all died due to thieving intruders or natural disasters (1:13-19). Job rips his clothes and shaves his head in sorrow, yet he still praises God in his prayers (1:20-21).

What are we to make of the interaction between God and Satan?

Put yourselves in Job’s “sandals”; how would you react to all four reports? Would you still praise God?

Has there been a time when similar, although probably not nearly as devastating, tragedies have struck you? Did you praise God?

Satan arrives in heaven again, and God allows him another opportunity to test Job. This time, Job is distressed with terrible skin sores. His wife urges him to denounce God and to give up and die, but Job protests, trying to endure his afflictions (2:1-10).

Three of Job’s companions, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, arrive to comfort him, sitting with Job in silence for seven days out of reverence for his grieving (2:11-13). On the seventh day, Job talks, starting a discussion in which each of the four men shares his reflections on Job’s troubles in poetic descriptions (3:1-37:24).

Job curses the day he was born, relating life and death to light and darkness. He hopes that his birth had been obscured in darkness and desires to have never been born, believing that life only increases his suffering. Eliphaz replies that Job, who has comforted other people, now reveals that he never actually knew their pain. Eliphaz concludes that Job's pain must be due to some sin Job has acted, and he recommends Job to seek God's favor. Bildad and Zophar agree that Job must have performed evil to provoke God's justice and argue that he should attempt to manifest more innocent behavior. Bildad supposes that Job's children brought their deaths upon themselves. Even worse, Zophar suggests that whatever wrongdoing Job has done he likely deserves more suffering than what he has experienced.

Job's three friends try to comfort him, but do they? What do they end up deciding has happened?

Have you ever experienced "comfort" like Job? Why is it that people often think like Job's three friends?

Job reacts to each of these remarks, becoming so angry that he calls his sympathizers "worthless physicians" who "whitewash [their help] with lies" (13:4). He questions why God judges people by their deeds if God can just as easily change or forgive their behavior. It is confusing to Job how a human can truly satisfy God's justice as His ways are mysterious and exceeding human comprehension. Furthermore, humans cannot possibly convince God with their words. God cannot be fooled, and Job confesses that he does not even know himself well enough to adequately defend his case to God. Job desires for someone who can mediate between himself and God, or be sent to Sheol, the dark space of the dead.

Job believes that there is a "witness" or a "Redeemer" in heaven who will testify for his integrity (16:19; 19:25). Who is that "Redeemer"?

The suffering becomes too much for Job, and he turns bitter, anxious, and scared. He deplors the injustice that God lets evil people thrive while he and many other honest people suffer. Job wants to face God and protest, but cannot physically find God. He assumes that wisdom is concealed from humans, but he decides to persevere in seeking wisdom by fearing God and evading evil.

Have you ever felt as bitter, anxious, and scared as Job, and it feels as if God were hiding?

God eventually intervenes, commanding Job to be brave and explains various detailed features of his creation (38:1-40:2; 40:6-41:34) [Reading 38:4-18 today]. Overcome by the appearance of God, Job recognizes God's infinite power and accepts the constraints of his human understanding (40:3-5; 42:1-6). This response pleases God, but he is upset with Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar for emitting lousy advice. Job prays on their behalf, and God forgives them (42:7-9). God then restores Job's health, granting him with twice as much property as before, new children, and a remarkably long life. In the end, Job never completely gave up hope or faith in God (42:10-17). And in a unique way, becomes a foreshadowing of Jesus.

How does God answer Job? Does He explain all His actions?

How does Job answer God in return?

Would you plead to God for the forgiveness of Job's three friends as he does? Why or why not?

Many people have used the ending of Job to claim God wants to bless us with more material blessings than we have now and end all our suffering if we just submit fully to Him. Based on our quick study of Job, is this true? Why or why not?

How is Job foreshadowing Jesus?

What are we to learn from Job?