

# Outline of Job

This overview and outline of Job is intended to assist you as you seek God by studying His Word.

## **Background:**

To teach us wisdom in suffering, God gives us Job. Job lived southeast of Israel, perhaps east of Edom and north of Arabia (see Lamentations 4:21). Job had 10 children who appear to be adults at the time his suffering began. This would place Job, most likely, at least in his fifties. After His suffering, Job lived 140 years (Job 42:16). This would make the total life of Job around 200 years old. Such lifespan would place Job somewhere around the time of Abraham. It appears that the Sabeans and the Chaldeans were nomads at this time (Job 1:15, 17) which would not be true of a later era. The fact that Job was the priest for his family and the absence of any mention of the children of Israel leads to the conclusion that it took place before Israel came into being. There is no hint of the Law in Job.

A very wealthy and blessed man, Job loses everything in a day (Job 1:13-19). Thereafter, he lost his health (Job 2:7). Three important friends, Eliphaz the Temanite (in Edom—1 Chronicles 1:43-45; Jeremiah 49:7), Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite, friends older than Job's father (Job 15:10; 32:6), heard that Job was afflicted and came to comfort him (Job 2:11). Seven days later, Job began to speak. What follows is an amazing dialogue between Job's friends and Job, culminating in an appearance by God. Do not be deceived. Job's friends espouse some sound theology in their discourses. In 1 Corinthians 3:19, Paul quotes Eliphaz in Job 5:13 as reflecting truth. But they did not speak right concerning God. Job did (Job 43:7). Theological truth spoken without the Divine Passion for humanity always distorts the image of God.

The lesson of Job is that for the righteous there will always be an end of suffering (James 5:11) followed by incomprehensible blessing. This is wisdom. The righteousness of Job extended to Ezekiel's day (Ezekiel 14:14, 20) and to ours.

How should we read Job? I suggest we read it with two perspectives. First, from the perspective of suffering, we should go with Job as he travels through his grief. He worships (Job 1:20-21). He sits alone and keeps silent (Job 2:13; see Lamentations 3:27-30). He laments that he was born (Job 3). He wishes to die (Job 6-7). He wishes he could speak with God (Job 9-10). He reminds himself who God is and pleads with Him (Job 12-14). He reflects on his own suffering (Job 16-17). He remembers his future hope (Job 19). He understands the end of the wicked (Job 21). He expresses confidence in the righteous judgment of God (Job 23-24). He acknowledges God's greatness and judgment (Job 26-27), the need for wisdom (Job 28), God's past blessing (Job 29), his present sufferings (Job 30), and his own righteous life (Job 31). Each of these are proper responses to suffering when . . .

. . . the focus is on God. Job kept his focus on God. In Job 3:4, 23, God is in his thoughts from the very start. His lament about his birth is a lament centered on a view that death for the believer is sleep and rest (Job 3:13). In Job 6:4, 8-10; 7:12-21; 9:1-10:22; 12:4, 6, 9, 13-25; 13:3, 7-11, 15-16, 20-27; 14:3, 13-17, 19-20; 16:7-9, 11-12-16, 20-21; 17:3-6; 19:1-27; 21:9, 14-15, 19-20, 22; 23:3-16; 24:1, 12, 22-23; 26:8-14; 27:2-3, 8-11, 13; 28:23-28; 29:2-5; 30:11, 19-24; 31:2, 4, 6, 14-15, 23, 28, 35 we have repeated references to God. Each of Job's discourses refer to God. God is not divorced at all from any of Job's thoughts. We find the same thing in the Psalms of lament. Working through his suffering, Job clings to the fact that God will vindicate him one day (Job 13:16; 14:13, 15, 17; 19:25-27; 23:3-7, 10).

Job never gives up on God. Though he wants to die and longs for relief from his sorrow, he keeps his focus on God. He does not discard God in his suffering. He does not jettison the Almighty from his grief. He does not try to retaliate against God because of his circumstances. Job reveals to us a heart of integrity in great sorrow; one that does not seek to minimize the pain, but while acknowledging the depth of sorrow also clings to an ultimate trust in God. Job cannot see the why, but he knows the Who. Ultimately, Job never lets the present suffering displace the far focus. The fear of the LORD is wisdom (Job 28:28).

The second perspective is that of the comforters. Observe the interaction of the friends with Job. I believe they truly wanted to help Job. They were his friends (Job 2:11). But in their theology, the clear and oppressive affliction of God could mean only one thing—sin. In their minds, the way out for Job was for Job to confess his sin, turn back to God, and God would make his life better than before (Job 4:7, 17; 5:8, 17; 8:4-6, 20-22; 11:6, 13-19; 15:5-6; 18:5; 20:5, 29; 21:5-11, 15, 21-23; 33:12, 34:10-12, 35-37; 36:16-21). We do well not to jump to conclusions concerning the reason for the sufferings of others. Rather, our role as humans is to share in their sorrow (Romans 12:15; 1 Corinthians 12:26) and to pray. We should deal kindly, strengthen, provide wisdom and sound advice (Job 6:14; 16:2-5; 19:21-22; 26:1-4), not talk too much (Job 13:5; 16:3-4), and pray (Job 16:21).

It is hard to find fault with the theology of Job's friends, except in this one matter; they followed a prosperity theology in God's dealings with humanity. They held to the belief that God will reward the righteous and punish the wicked in this present age. Job said "no," the wicked here thrive, but they are reserved for the day of doom (Job 21). This one matter so tainted the theology of Job's friends that God said they did not speak right concerning Him (Job 42:7). Their theology led them to an unrelenting assault on Job. It was enough to arouse God's wrath (Job 42:7).

Below I provide my abbreviated summary of the discourses:

### **I. Round One 3-14**

- A. Job: Why was I born? 3
- B. Eliphaz: Relax; you have sinned and God is chastening 4-5
- C. Job: Have I sinned? What have I done? 6-7
- D. Bildad: If you had not sinned, God would not do this to you. 8
- E. Job: God is free to do what He wants, my righteousness does not change this. 9-10
- F. Zophar: Your talk is empty, you deserve greater suffering 11
- G. Job: I am as wise as you, I will talk to God 12-14

### **II. Round Two 15-21**

- A. Eliphaz: Your own speech reveals your sin 15
- B. Job: You are miserable comforters 16-17
- C. Bildad: Listen, it is the wicked who suffer such things 18
- D. Job: No, God has wronged me. Why, I do not know, but I shall see God. 19
- E. Zophar: The triumph of the wicked always comes to an end. 20
- F. Job: It is not so. Look at the wicked. Their payment comes after this life, not in this life. 21

### **III. Round 3 22-31**

- A. Eliphaz: Get acquainted with God and your troubles will cease. 22
- B. Job: Oh, if only I could find God; but He is Himself. 23-24
- C. Bildad: How is it possible that man can be righteous? 25
- D. Job: You have helped not at all. I am righteous but the hypocrite and the wicked have no hope 26-27
- E. Job: Where can wisdom be found? 28

F. Job: I remember God's former blessings, my present suffering, and my righteousness. Oh that God would answer me. 29-31

#### **IV. Elihu, the Young One, speaks: Job, you cannot be right. God is the One who is right. Admit your sin and consider God. 32-37**

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The book closes with God's two discourses (Job 38-41). There is an introductory statement by God:

*"Who is this, darkening counsel with speech without knowledge? Please, gird up, as a man, your loins; I will question you and that you may answer Me."  
Job 38:2-3*

And then there is the summary statement by Job:

*"Who is this, concealing counsel without knowledge? Therefore I have recounted and I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, and I did not know."*

These two statements form a framework for this section. Job has asked to address God. God stoops to address Job. The Hebrew particle "na" (please) in Job 38:3 is used with entreaties and to soften commands. We should not read God's answers as demanding, but as the same God we found in Job 1 and 2, a God who is immensely pleased with Job. Job spoke rightly about God (Job 42:7). Job responds to God's answer: "I am 'made small.'" (Job 40:4) (see 2 Samuel 6:22) He later says that these things are "too wonderful" for me (Job 42:3).

In Job 40:2, the language is one of a legal suit. Job has charged God with wrong (Job 19:6), though not the moral wrong referenced in Job 1:22. Job expressed that he had no opportunity to take God to court (Job 9:32-33). But God actually waives His prerogatives as a sovereign and comes down to engage righteous Job in this suit. God begins His answer to Job's charge of being wronged with His role in creation. Notice the words that God uses. He recounts His creation and the joy (Job 38:7). He speaks of His acts of putting wisdom into man (Job 38:36). He speaks of animals, their hunger and food (Job 38:39-41), their birth, freedom, the pride and stupidity of the ostrich, the fearlessness of the horse, and the eyes of the hawk. God is no clockmaker God. He actively manages the world He created and provides for the animals (Matthew 6:26-31; Luke 12:6-7). That God was so involved in His lesser creation speaks volumes of His involvement in those who were made in His image. God is not absent in our suffering! He kept Satan from taking Job's life.

After Job re-affirms (he has no words to answer) in Job 40:3-5 what he had stated earlier in Job 9:3, 14-15, God asks Job whether he wishes to condemn God in order to justify himself (Job 40:8). God then notes that Job cannot save himself. Next, God talks about two creatures He made with Job (behemoth—Job 40:15-24 and leviathan—Job 41). The point is that God is greater than His creation and should be feared (Job 41:10-11). Job responds saying that he knows God can do anything (Job 42:2). Job concludes his answer with these words:

*"I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You.  
Therefore, I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."  
Job 42:5-6*

Seeing God made all of Job's sufferings worthwhile (see Romans 8:18). We have so little concept of the blessings of seeing God!

How shall we apply wisdom to sufferings? By fearing God and hoping for His mercy. Consider Job, and Moses (Hebrews 11:24-27), and Asaph (Psalm 73:13-26), and Jeremiah (Lamentations 3:24-32), and Christ (1 Peter 2:23).

*Therefore, let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls  
in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.*

*1 Peter 4:19*

One day our suffering will be turned to joy (Isaiah 51:11). We will find God more than extravagant in making right all of our sorrows.

**Key Idea:** "Suffering"

**Key Passage:** Job 19:25-27

**Key Lesson:** Suffering may come for a while, but the end of God is His favor and grace.