

# THE BOOK OF JOB

## Sources:

Ernest Lucas, *Exploring the Old Testament*, vol. 3

Ian Provan, *Old Testament Foundations* lectures, Regent College

Daniel Simundson, “Job” in EnterTheBible.org

Bruce Waltke, *Introduction to Wisdom Literature* lectures, Regent College

**Gustave Doré**  
1832 – 1883



## SUMMARY

- Job is presented as such a good man that **God boasts** about him in a conversation with Satan.
- Satan is then given **permission to test** how faithful Job would be if he had to endure loss, grief, and pain.
- Job's **friends** come to bring comfort to Job, but fail miserably.
- After an extended series of **dialogues** between Job and four friends, **God speaks** and Job's good fortunes return.
- **Questions about why good people like Job suffer are left unanswered**, but Job's relationship with God is renewed.



**Job by Gerard Seghers (1591-1651)**

## SO WHAT?

- The **problem of suffering** and God's involvement in the pain of the world is always with us.
- Efforts to find the cause of suffering often lead one (as Job and his counselors) to **put the blame** somewhere — on self, others, God, or Satan.
- The book of Job asks us to:
  - **look beyond blame,**
  - **accept uncertainty,** and
  - **trust God** for what we cannot see or control.

## WHO WROTE IT?

- **No one really knows who wrote the book of Job.**
- **No author is identified.**
- **Some scholars believe that there was likely more than one author**

## WHEN WAS IT WRITTEN?

- The first two chapters read like some of the older narratives in Genesis or Samuel.
- Job is mentioned as a figure known to Ezekiel (Ezekiel 14:14, 20).
- There is **no clear context** for the writing of Job, though a strong case can be made for the period of **Israel's exile in Babylon** or the years immediately following.
- And the Elihu chapters could be still later.

## CONTEXT

- **Questions about suffering and God's role** in it are common throughout history.
- During and after the exile, God's people wondered **what went wrong** in their relationship with God.
- The prophets and Deuteronomistic history made a **connection between sin and consequences**.
- During the exile, many **began to question the simplistic idea** that all suffering is caused by the sin of the sufferer.



## HOW DO I READ IT?

- Job mentions **no historical dates** or persons and takes place in a **strange land**.
- The book is a **timeless story** that addresses theological questions that cannot be addressed with simple answers.
- Although the questions have profound pastoral implications, the book **NOT primarily about pastoral care**.
- It is long, complicated, repetitive, and some passages that **are difficult to understand**.

## JOB: OUTLINE

1. Prologue Job 1-2
2. Dialogues Job 3-31
3. Speeches of Elihu Job 32-37
4. **God Speaks** Job 38-41

See Lucas, pg 118.

## PERMISSION GIVEN TO SATAN

The presence of Satan raises **many questions**.

- **Who is this Satan?**
- Satan here is a title—**Accuser/Adversary**—not a name.
- This is one of only 3 appearances in the Old Testament of Satan as a heavenly figure.
- **Why are God and Satan in such a cozy relationship?**
- **Why does God NOT address Satan at the end of the book to taunt him for losing the bet?**

## SATAN'S ROLE

- **God allows Satan to hurt Job** to prove a point.
- A large question is **how God relates to evil**, whether called Satan, evil spirits, the devil, or the ferocious beasts in Job 40-41.
- Christians live in hopeful expectation that some day **God's promises will finally destroy all evil.**

## ANSWERS--HELPFUL OR HURTFUL?

- Job's friends intend to bring **comfort**.
- Yet, they have heavy-handed interpretations about sin.
- The main answers they bring are:
  1. **Job deserves his suffering,**
  2. **All humans are sinners so even good people are not immune from suffering, and**
  3. **God may use suffering to teach us something.**
- **All these are common answers to suffering, even in our day.**

## EDUCATIONAL VALUE OF SUFFERING

- Perhaps suffering is intended to **teach the sufferer**, to bring one back to a proper sense of priorities, to provide warning that to continue such behavior may lead to even worse calamities.
- This is one **common understanding of suffering** in both Old and New Testaments. It gives a **more positive view** than to regard suffering only as punishment.
- Both Eliphaz (5:17-27) and Elihu (36:8-12) try to apply this answer to Job.

## SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

- “We can ignore even pleasure. But pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”

— C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*



1. Do you agree with the C.S. Lewis quote? Why or why not?
2. Have you every learned anything through suffering or “through the school of hard knocks?” If so, tell the story.

## THE LEGITIMACY OF LAMENT

- Job is often remembered as **the patient one** who endured all kinds of hardships. That may describe Job in chapters 1 and 2.
- But in chapter 3 through most of the book, it is clear that **Job is not willing to suffer in silence.**
- The image of a silent sufferer is dismissed through careful reading of the whole book.
- The laments show us that **God can be trusted with our cries, complaints, and even pettiness.**



## WHY? (21 TIMES)

- Job 7:20 **Why** have you made me your mark?  
**Why** have I become a burden to you?
- Job 10:2 I will say to God, “Do not condemn me; let me know **why** you contend against me.”
- Job 13:24 **Why** do you hide your face and count me as your enemy?
- Job 21:7 **Why** do the wicked live, reach old age, and grow mighty in power?

## IV. GOD SPEAKS (JOB 38-41)

- The book leads up to the climax when God finally speaks.
- After all these chapters of human effort to make sense out of Job's suffering, **the reader hopes that God will finally clear it all up for Job**, his friends, and all the readers of the book.
  - Is Job guilty or not?
  - Why do innocent people suffer and the wicked escape untouched by calamity?

## IV. GOD SPEAKS (JOB 38-41)

- **God does not answer these questions!**
- **Rather, in two speeches, God assures that:**
  - **the created order is God's domain and**
  - **humans cannot know and do what only God can do.**
- **So, in the meantime, the best thing to do is to trust God to handle the unknowns.**

## JOB REPENTS

- After God's second speech **Job is moved to confess the greatness of God's power** and that he has spoken foolishly of things which he did not understand (42:1-3).
- The whole response is a **self-humbling** in the face of his new, deeper experience of God.

## THEME: TRUST

- The usual understanding of Job 42:1-6 is that **Job now accepts his limits**, turns away from his earlier angry statements about God, and **puts his trust back in God**.
- **Job's trust seems to be renewed** when God addresses him directly.

# FROM WHY? TO TRUST



**Nick Vujicic**

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CM\\_eHJcdjig](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CM_eHJcdjig)

## SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

1. **What did you hear that was meaningful for you?**
2. **How is Nick's question (Why God?) and God's response (Do you trust me?) similar to Job's?**

## THEME: EVIL

- **Satan** in Job 1-2 is **NOT** the same as the devil, though Satan does seem to make trouble.
- The **Behemoth** (chapter 40) and **Leviathan** (chapter 41) represent a common Old Testament way of personifying evil in the world.
  - The sea and the monsters provide symbolic or mythic ways to identify the reality of evil.
  - Without God's help, we would be completely vulnerable.



## THEME: CRISIS OF FAITH

- Many have experienced a **crisis of faith when terrible things happen** to them or their loved ones.
- They ask **how a good God could either cause or permit** such things to occur. They wonder if a good and just God is at work in the world.

## THEME: CRISIS OF FAITH

- Ian **Provan** states that it seems strange for people to have a crisis of faith and wonder if there is a God when tragedy strikes.
- **If there were no God, then tragedy is normal and why wonder?!**
- Also, are the same people thanking God for all the good?

## THEME: GOD'S CONTROL

- It is a great theological dilemma to maintain that **God is in control of all that happens** and at the same time grant that **humans often act in defiance of God's will.**
- Finally, **God's "control" in Job is not simplistic**, but mysterious, hidden, and complex.

## PERSPECTIVE: DAY OF THE LORD

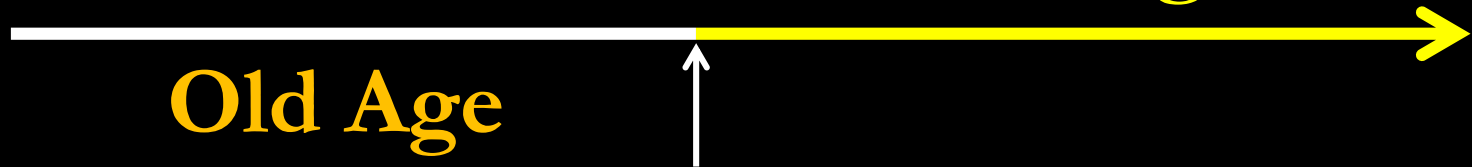
### Old Testament View

(Isa 4:2-6; Zeph 3:15-20; Zech 14:9-20)

New Age

Old Age

“Day of the Lord”  
or Judgment Day



# PERSPECTIVE: DAY OF THE LORD

New Age  
starts with

New Testament View

Jesus'  
baptism

New Age

Continues  
to eternity



Old Age

Old Age ends  
with Jesus' return

We are in the  
“Messy Middle” or overlap



JESUS IS THE QUESTION TO ALL OUR ANSWERS.

“Have patience with everything unresolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves as if they were locked rooms or books written in a very foreign language. Don’t search for the answers, which would not be given to you now because you would not be able to live them. And the point is to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps then, some day far in the future, you will gradually, without noticing it, live your way into the answer.” ~ Rainier Maria Rilke

## BOOK RECOMMENDATION

