

WISDOM LITERATURE: **JOB**

INTRO:

The Book of Job is a masterpiece in poetry, divine comfort, and teaching on the sovereignty of God. It has been considered the Romans of the Old Testament, as it reminds us that God works all things together for His good for those who love Him and who have been called according to His purposes. **Job is more than a children's story but simple enough for a child to understand while also addressing the most complex and pervasive questions of the human condition on this earth: Why does God allow suffering?**

In addition, the book of Job explores profound questions, such as, is suffering punishment for sin? Why do some people succeed and experience little suffering while others face trial after trial? We see in Job that he not only cries out to God but also faces judgment from his closest friends, who, instead of comforting him, believe the only reason for Job's suffering is his sin, which (they wrongly think) is God's divine judgment. This book provides us with great truth and a serious caution to avoid assuming you are speaking in line with God's will and that, ultimately, God's plans may remain a mystery.

At the end of the book, God answers Job. The Lord opens his eyes to the meaning of his suffering (not just the cause) and shows Job that he did not understand that God can and will often keep his knowledge and purposes hidden in His sovereignty in our lives. The book of Job teaches us deep expressions of frustration and crying out in our pain to the Lord are not sinful but rather sincere inquiries to the Lord regarding the meaning of suffering.

Job gives a beautiful example to all of us on how to respond to suffering: humble submission to the finiteness of our understanding of God. This book gives us an example of the peace, comfort, and trust only provided by the Lord, who will both vindicate and reveal to us that we must trust Him even when we don't know the purpose behind our suffering. We also find, at the end, that God restores all suffering, which points to the future Messiah who has redeemed us and is our firm foundation through all the pains and trials we will face on this earth.

IMAGE FOR UNDERSTANDING:

As a kid or college student did you ever get to a test and realize you didn't study as well as you probably should have? Maybe you walked in confidently but were very quickly humbled? Throughout the book of Job, we see Job's friends "walk in" confidently but fail to counsel well. They speak with confidence, but if you read carefully, you'll see that Job's friends don't always know best...most of the time, they're wrong.

The Book of Job is an excellent teaching on how to be careful and cautious when presuming that we know God's purposes for the circumstances in our own lives or others' lives. The Book of Job emphasizes the magnitude and mystery of God. We are finite beings and should be humble in our assumptions because our understanding of our almighty Creator is limited by the fact that we are finite beings compared to an omniscient and omnipresent God. Wisdom is both given by God and defined in relation to Him.

BOOK ORGANIZATION:

Job's Dilemma (Chapters 1-2)

Job's Debates (Chapters 3-37)

3 Cycles of Debate (3-27)

Job's Last Stand (28-31)

Elihu's Rebuttal (32-37)

Job's Deliverance (38-42)

JESUS IN THE BOOK OF JOB

The Book of Job is a beautiful illustration of a righteous man who suffers although "blameless;" more importantly, the book points to the coming Messiah and redeemer of all suffering. Job and Jesus have many similarities, one of which is that they are both righteous! As a man, Job is not perfect, but despite his imperfection, we see God calls him "blameless and upright" (Job 1:8).

The book of Job reminds us that we have an enemy in Satan, which we are reminded again of in the New Testament (1 Peter 5:8). Job and Jesus both endured undeserved suffering while on this earth. They both pleaded to God to remove the cup of suffering. God may have been initially silent during Job's suffering, but Jesus endured the ultimate silence when He cried out on the cross (Matt. 27:46). Job silently listened to God when he finally answered him, and the Lord asked him to make a sacrifice on behalf of his friends who wronged God and blessed Job with double than he originally had prior to his suffering. Jesus paid the ultimate sacrifice for every sin and provides an even better hope. His death, burial, and resurrection offer eternal hope to all.

BIBLE STUDY SPECIFICS: HOW TO APPROACH THE BOOK OF JOB

- **Observation**
 - What is God teaching us in the text of the Book of Job?
 - Location: Where are we?
 - Events: What is happening?
 - Purpose: Why is it happening? Or do we know?
 - People: Who is speaking? What is their point?
 - Time: When did this happen?
 - Note any contextual information given in the heading
 - What literary devices and types are being used? What is the author emphasizing, contrasting, and bringing attention to?

Literary Devices to Look for:

- **Prose:** a literary type distinguished from poetry, especially by its greater irregularity and variety of rhythm and its closer correspondence to everyday speech patterns. Think along the lines of a monologue. (Job 1:1-2:13; 42:7-17)
- **Poetic Dialogue:** poetic dialogue is a conversation between two or more subjects discussing controversial, complex topics using poetic elements and techniques. (Job 4-41)
 - **Parallelism:** phrases or sentences of a similar meaning placed side by side, balancing each other. (Job 4:17)

- **Metaphor:** comparison primarily using 'like, are, as.' (Job 13, 14)
- **Repetition:** a keyword used multiple times like 'comfort' (Job 2:11, 6:10, 7:13)
- **Interpretation**
 - Explore the messianic significance of the Book of Job (how do you see Jesus in The Book of Job?)
 - Scripture: James 5:11 – Job's steadfastness in his suffering is an example and points to the compassion and mercy brought to all who believe in our Lord
 - The story of Job is often seen as a book on suffering, but rarely is it remembered for restoration and hope. What is the significant and symbolic meaning of the themes of suffering, restoration, and hope that point directly to Jesus and the New Testament?
 - What is it looking back on? What is it pointing forward to? If you're unsure, you probably need to research the context more.
 - Remember who is speaking! Just because Job's friends said it, doesn't make it right!
 - Remember where Job falls chronologically! It likely took place early in the story of Genesis!
- **Application**
 - How do we pray and endure suffering, considering the text?
 - How do we discover God's presence in good times and bad?
 - How do we live by God's sovereignty?
 - How do we respond when we experience suffering in our own lives?
 - What are the lessons taught to both Job and his friends that we need to consider ourselves?
- **Prayer**
 - Job repeatedly prayed to the Lord in complete honesty, asking, "Tell me what charges you have against me." (Job 1:2) and "Show me my offense." (Job 13:23). How can Job's examples encourage you to be more honest in your prayer life with God?
 - When we pray, we can often be the only ones speaking. Referencing the scriptures above, ask the Lord to speak to you, and examine your heart.
 - Job showed an example of waiting and persevering through his suffering. Pray that God would give you the patience of Job to wait when your prayers seem unanswered.
 - When God spoke to Job, his response was silence and correction, leading to a better understanding of God. When you pray, are you open to his conviction and revealing what is happening in your heart? Pray that the Lord will help you to reveal your heart to Him.

WHAT HAS CHURCH HISTORY SAID ABOUT THE BOOK OF JOB:

Augustine

"What, then, is the God I worship? ... You are the most hidden from us and yet the most present among us, the most beautiful and yet the most strong, ever enduring; and yet we cannot comprehend you."

Thomas Aquinas

"If divine providence is denied, no reverence or true fear of God will remain among men. Each man can weigh well how great will be the propensity for vice and the lack of desire for virtue which follows from this idea. For nothing so calls men back from evil things and induces them to good so much as the fear and love of God. For this reason the first and foremost aim of those who had pursued wisdom inspired by the

spirit of God for the instruction of others was to remove this opinion from the hearts of men. So, after the promulgation of the Law and the Prophets, the Book of Job occupies first place in the order of Holy Scripture, the books composed by the wisdom of the Holy Spirit for the instruction of men. The whole intention of this book is directed to this: to show that human affairs are ruled by divine providence."

Martin Luther

"I would wish you to follow the example of that just and godly man, Job, who, when he had lost all his children, all his wealth and substance, said: "Have we received good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil? The hand of the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord," etc. He rightly considered that both good and evil come of the Lord; even so do you likewise; then you shall see that you have much greater gifts and benefits left of God to you than the evil you now feel...you forget the glorious treasure God has given you, in the true knowledge of his Word, a good and peaceable conscience, which alone should overweigh all evil which may happen unto you."

Matthew Henry

"If in all our troubles we look to the Lord, he will support us. The Lord is righteous. All we have is from his gift; we have forfeited it by sin and ought not to complain if he takes any part from us. Discontent and impatience charge God with folly. Against these Job carefully watched; and so, must we, acknowledging that as God has done right, but we have done wickedly, so God has done wisely, but we have done very foolishly. And may the malice and power of Satan render that Savior more precious to our souls, who came to destroy the works of the devil, who, for our salvation, suffered from that enemy far more than Job suffered, or we can think.

