

Overview of Job

The book of Job is unique among all the books of Scripture, probing questions concerning suffering and God in ways that none other do. The events of the book may date to the time of Abraham or before, during what we typically know as the “Patriarchal age,” and prior to the giving of the Law of Moses. No one knows for sure when it was written, or who exactly wrote it. Yet its character and content is a powerful and inspired testimony to God’s greatness and wisdom.

Job lived in a place called Uz. He is described as a man who was “blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil.” He was also a very wealthy man, “the greatest of all the men in the east” (Job 1:1-3). It seems that Job had it all, and he wasn’t taking it for granted as he continually served God.

Job’s story is told in a way that gives the reader more information than Job had. Job could not see behind the scenes. He did not know about Satan’s plan to attempt to make Job turn from God. Satan stood before God making accusations against Job as being one who served God only because it paid him to do so (Job 1:9-10). If Job were to lose his possessions and family, then he would curse God, Satan argued. God expressed confidence in Job and allowed the testing, and Job responded by worshiping God. Satan then argued that if Job himself were to suffer, then he would curse God. God



allowed Satan to test Job by not only taking his possessions and family, but also by causing great physical suffering for Job himself. This sets the scene for the rest of the book.

Job lost his children, but his wife remained, and she told him to curse God and die. She was no help to Job in this situation. Then Job had three friends who came to comfort him. They sat silent for seven days before they spoke up, but when they did speak up, they were little help to Job due to their own faulty assumptions about suffering and God. From chapter three on, the book records the conversations that took place between Job, his friends, Elihu, and God.

Job was suffering tremendous pain emotionally and physically. He had lost his children and possessions. He was in a terrible state physically. His wife had told him to curse God and die. His friends would begin to accuse him of sin. How would our faith hold up under such circumstances? What would we say to another who suffered like this? What would we want to say to God?

Job’s friends appeared to have good motives. After all, how many would travel their distance and sit for a week without saying anything in order to comfort one in pain? Job, however, broke the silence. He spoke against the day he was born, expressing his deep turmoil. This opened the door for the

friends to speak up and express their views about the reason Job was suffering. The pattern is that the friends speak, then Job answers. There are three rounds in which this happens.

The theological position of the three friends is that suffering is caused by one's personal sin. Since Job was suffering so greatly, then he must have done something horrible or committed some terrible sins. It only made sense to them that this was the case, and from their perspective, they were pleading with Job to confess and repent if he wanted to avoid further suffering. Job, however, knew better, defending his innocence against their charges. He didn't know why he was suffering, but he knew he wasn't guilty of what they were charging. It appears that one of Job's challenges was to adjust his own view of suffering. Though he expressed continued faith in God, he did question God's justice and wondered why God had allowed this to happen to him.

Elihu, a younger man listening to the discussion, stepped in to defend God and rebuke Job. Finally, God Himself appeared and spoke, showing that none of them knew as much as they thought they did. He humbled them all and began to question Job: "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding" (38:4).

The book deals with the problem of suffering, but does not give us all the answers we may like to have. Instead of God telling Job why he was suffering, God tells Job that he doesn't know all the factors and reasons why He may allow certain things to happen. The answer is to trust God who remains in control and can make things work out even through great difficulties. Even now, we need to trust God in His

wisdom and power to do what is right. In the end, Job repented of his false conclusions and his questioning of God's justice, and he was restored to a greater position than before.

Job remains a great book of comfort. Yet its greatest feature is to give us a renewed perspective on God. "As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives."

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