

LG | Group

[Job - Introduction]

WARM-UP (10 mins)

It is likely that everyone present had a very busy day, maybe even a trying day. Let's take a moment to still our minds and go the Lord in prayer.

- After hearing the sermon from Sunday, what most resonated with you? What were the takeaways for your family as a whole?
- In light of Sunday's message, have you resolved to make any life changes?

ILLUMINATE (40 mins)

This gathering will be slightly different than previous gatherings. Since we are introducing the book of Job this week, we believe there are two very helpful resources that will be beneficial to our understanding of the book. The practice of reading/watching introductory materials allows for the book to come to life when reading it. That is our goal tonight; learn about the book of Job...

- 1) Let's read out loud together the ESV Study Bible Introduction (3.5 pages - attached). This will allow us to have a better understanding of the book prior to investigating its verses.
- 2) Let's watch together (or send to members in advance) an introductory video created by The Gospel Project for the book of Job (11 mins) → bibleproject.com/explore/job/

PRAY

Use this time to pray specifically. Pray for the needs of others; locally and abroad.

Job

Author

While Job is one of the most profound books of the Bible, its anonymous author can be known only through reading between its lines. Certainly he can be numbered among “the wise” (cf. [Prov. 24:23](#)), given his fondness for proverbs, which he quotes to develop a point: “those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same” ([Job 4:8](#)); “man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward” ([5:7](#)); “a stupid man will get understanding when a wild donkey’s colt is born a man!” ([11:12](#)).

Though the story of Job has its setting outside Israel to the east and south (Uz is related to Edom, which may be the setting of the book, cf. [2:11](#); [6:19](#); [Lam. 4:21](#)), the author of Job is a Hebrew, thoroughly immersed in the Hebrew Scriptures (see below).

The author of Job was a well-traveled individual who could draw on a wealth of knowledge and experience. He knew the constellations ([Job 9:9](#); [38:31](#)), could discuss meteorology ([38:22–38](#)) or describe a sophisticated mining operation ([28:1–11](#)). He could refer to skiffs of papyrus reed plying the waters ([9:26](#)), or the plants that grew in the marshes ([8:11–19](#)). He had observed ostriches, eagles, mountain goats, hippopotamuses, crocodiles, and war horses ([chs. 39–41](#)). As was true of all the wise, he made extensive use of nature analogies to explain and defend moral truths.

Etymologically the name Job could be related to the Hebrew word for “enemy,” with reference to either Job’s attitude to God or his response to suffering. The name might also be a contracted form of “Where is my father?” But it is difficult to know, because its actual meaning was already lost to the earliest rabbinic commentators. However, the name is known outside the Bible. It is the name of the prince of Ashtaroth in Bashan in the Amarna tablets (c. 1350 B.C.), and the name of a Palestinian chief in an Egyptian text (c. 2000 B.C.). At Ugarit a version of the name appears in a list of palace personnel.

Date

There are no historical allusions in the book to determine its time or circumstances. From ancient times there has been much discussion about the occasion for writing Job. The Babylonian Talmud records a variety of opinions as to the author of the book, ranging from someone in the time of the patriarchs, to Moses, to one of those who returned from the Babylonian captivity (*Baba Bathra* 15a). The hero of the book is given a patriarchal setting, authentic in detail and coloring, which has led some interpreters to suggest an early date, perhaps as early as the time of Abraham.

The earliest reference to Job outside the book itself is in Ezekiel. The prophet names three paragons of virtue: Noah, Daniel, and Job ([Ezek. 14:14, 20](#)). It is not certain whether Ezekiel knew of these men from the biblical narrative or from other traditions; this is particularly true for Daniel, a book that could not have been complete in Ezekiel’s day. If Ezekiel knew of Job through the biblical book, then it would be preexilic.

Attempts have been made to date Job on the basis of theological development within the Scriptures. Job has been viewed as an elaborate *midrash* (type of commentary) on [Deuteronomy 28](#), or as an effort to apply a discussion of the problem of suffering for the nation (such as that depicted in Isaiah) to the individual. Arguments based on “theological development,” however, are difficult to sustain, because they presuppose that one can actually describe how such themes developed over time.

The author of Job makes direct allusion to the Hebrew Scriptures (e.g., [Ps. 8:4](#); cf. [Job 7:17–18](#)), and at times quotes lines directly (e.g., [Ps. 107:40](#); cf. [Job 12:21, 24](#)). Such precise repetition of phrases and reapplication of biblical thought indicates that the poet had access to these writings, though again it cannot be certain in what form they existed.

Some have suggested, therefore, that the theological questions addressed in Job, and the use of Scripture in the book, indicate a time for the composition approximating Ezekiel’s, but confidence in such a conclusion is hard to come by. The author uses a lot of vocabulary with meanings known in later Hebrew. This does not confirm a more precise dating but may favor a date that is exilic (587 to 538 B.C.) or postexilic (after 538).

Theological Themes

The book of Job concerns itself with the question of faith in a sovereign God. Can God be trusted? Is he good and just in his rule of the world? Job will declare outright that God has wronged him ([19:6–7](#)). At the same time, Job is certain that his “enemy” is actually his advocate and will vindicate him.

The book sets out from the beginning to show that the reasons for human suffering often remain a secret to human beings. Indeed, Job’s sufferings come upon him because Satan accused him in the heavenly courts, and the reader never learns whether these reasons were explained to Job. Probably they were not. There is irony in the book of Job, due to the fact that God seems both too close and too far away. On the one hand, Job complains that God is watching him every moment so that he cannot even swallow his spit ([7:19](#)). On the other hand, Job finds God elusive, feeling that he cannot be found ([9:11](#)). Though God is intensely concerned about humans, he does not always answer their most agonizing questions.

At the same time, Job’s friends offer no real help. They come to “comfort” him ([2:11](#)), but Job ends up declaring them “miserable comforters” who would “comfort” him “with empty nothings” ([21:34](#)). These friends represent an oversimplified “orthodoxy,” based on a misreading of the wisdom tradition to the effect that all troubles are punishments for wrongdoing. Their “comfort” consists largely of applying this message to Job, urging him to identify his sin and repent of it. In so doing, these friends serve as a mirror for all readers who might be inclined to say similar things to people in distress.

Astonishingly, the Lord does not take Job to task over his words, instead calling them “right” ([42:7](#)). The book as a whole illustrates that a full understanding of God’s reasons for events is not a prerequisite for faithfulness amid terrible suffering. Further, Job’s deep perplexity and questioning are not a provocation to God.

Purpose, Occasion, and Background

The book of Job addresses a universal problem for all people of all faith perspectives, even for those who believe that the world is the result of impersonal forces operating in a predetermined manner. The author of Job specifically addresses those who believe in a personal Creator, known by the name Yahweh (the LORD), according to his self-revelation. His work is simply about God and man; it was written to those who struggle with the justice of a sovereign God in a world filled with suffering.

The author does not provide a theodicy in the sense of defending the justice of God. Job's friends serve as a foil to that end. Their wisdom is a human effort to resolve this dilemma, but as far as the author is concerned, these efforts fail. God also declares that the friends are in the wrong ([42:8](#)). Elihu's intervention probes further, but neither is he the intermediary whom Job seeks. The author is concerned about the triumph of faith in a time of suffering. To this end his hero succeeds. Job can triumphantly declare, "I know that my Redeemer lives" ([19:25](#)). Job's resolve to love and trust the one who seems to attack him as an enemy is evident throughout.

The problem of suffering is timeless, whether national or individual. It is therefore not helpful to infer specific national settings that might have inspired the book of Job, whatever proposed relationships may be observed to books such as Deuteronomy and Isaiah. The author is careful not to allow his reflections to be limited by a particular set of circumstances.

The wisdom writers of Israel worked within their own context of thought and worldview. Though they did use sayings and works from other cultures, particularly Egypt, they wrote to articulate their own faith for their people, who were the primary readers. At the same time, they considered their thoughts applicable to all people of all times: "Hear this, all peoples! Give ear, all inhabitants of the world, both low and high, rich and poor together! My mouth shall speak wisdom; the meditation of my heart shall be understanding" ([Ps. 49:1-3](#)). A universal and timeless perspective is deliberately conveyed by the selection of a non-Israelite hero, the intentional avoidance of the Israelite name for God in the poetic section (from [ch. 3](#) on) until God speaks (except for the reference to [Isa. 41:20](#) in [Job 12:9](#)), and the relative absence of any specific historical allusions.

Job and His Setting

As already indicated, the Israelite author presents Job as a person living in Uz, which is outside the borders of Israel itself. His piety ([1:1](#)) exemplifies the ideal in Israelite wisdom, and he invokes the name of Yahweh ([1:21](#)). At the same time, his relationship to Abraham's offspring remains a mystery. The events of the book seem to be set in the times of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The way [Ezekiel 14:14, 20](#) (see [note there](#)) refer to Job along with two others apparently from ancient times enhances this impression. So do the favorite names for the deity, "God" (Hb. *'Eloah*, the singular of *'Elohim*) and "the Almighty" (Hb. *Shadday*), which seem more suited to the days before [Exodus 3:14; 6:3](#) (the name Yahweh, the LORD, appears only in [Job 1-2, and 38-42](#), with one lone exception in the middle of the book, [12:9](#)).

The prophet Ezekiel mentions Job along with Noah and Daniel, and this seems to imply that he took Job as a real person. This is also the implication of [James 5:11](#): "Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful." At the same time, the author has supplied many details for the sake of his literary presentation: the question of

whether Job and his friends actually spoke exalted poetry to each other is not important to the author's purposes.

History of Salvation Summary

In the history of God's dealings with his people, the question of the apparently undeserved suffering of faithful individuals recurs again and again. The book of Job reminds God's people that they have an enemy who will denounce them (Satan), and, through the ignorance of Job's friends, it helps the faithful to remember at all times how small a part of any situation is the fragment that they see. This equips believers to trust and obey amid life's perplexities, and it enables the faithful to support and encourage one another in a spirit of tenderness and humility ([Rom. 12:15](#)). The death and resurrection of Jesus have not removed this perplexity. They have, however, given a firm foundation to Job's hope in his "Redeemer" ([Job 19:25-27](#)). (For an explanation of the "History of Salvation," see the [Overview of the Bible](#). See also [History of Salvation in the Old Testament: Preparing the Way for Christ](#).)