

LITERARY OVERVIEW

- **Title:** Job – named after main character in the book. The meaning of the name could be linked to “enemy” or “where is my father?” This is a known name in the Amarna tables (c.1350 B.C.) and an Egyptian text (c.2000 B.C.).
- **Author:** Anonymous – considered one of “the wise” of Israel, thoroughly familiar with Hebrew Scriptures (7:17-18/Psalm 8:4; 12:21, 24/Psalm 107:40 Isaiah 41:20) and Israel’s God.
- **Date:** Suggested time of writing includes time of patriarchs, Moses, and Babylonian captivity. Most common is during time of Abraham. Attempts have been made to date the book according to theological development, but this is difficult because of so many presuppositions necessary to begin. Some of the words used do seem to move the actual compilation in final form to a later, perhaps exilic or post-exilic date (500’s B.C.).
- **Period Covered:** No specific time references to indicate specific time. The earliest reference to the man Job outside of the book is Ezekiel (14:14, 20) together with Noah and Daniel. He is mentioned in James 5:11 as an example of perseverance and demonstration of the compassion and mercy of God. There is the possibility that there is a specific kind of “generic-ness” to time and place so as to make the book more universally relevant.
- **Place/setting:** Job is from the land of Uz which is outside of the borders of the land of Israel.
- **Main Characters:** Job, 3 comforters (Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar), Elihu, and God.
- **Minor Characters:** Job’s children, Job’s wife, the creation [constellations (9:9; 38:31) meteorology (38:22-38) mining (28:1-11) boating (9:26) plants (8:11-19) animals (39-41)].
- **Form/Genre:** Prose narrative (prologue and epilogue) dramatic poetic dialogue (section in between)
- **Primary Purpose:** To give an example of the difficulty of the suffering of the righteous in a fallen world.
- **Challenges:** To not get lost in the repeated cycles of arguments. To sort through the good and bad theology and convoluted conclusions to basically sound principles. To answer the question whether this is an eyewitness reporting of the actual words of the dialogue or the inspired poetic retelling of the account.
- **Storyline:** Job, declared by God to be a righteous man, is heavily afflicted by Satan and Job’s friends respond by a courtroom-like interrogation trying to find out what sin Job has committed to bring about this affliction. Job declares his basic innocence, and in the end God responds without directly answering, and Job is restored.

OUTLINE¹

- I. **Prologue: Job’s Character and the Circumstances of His Test (1:1–2:13)**
 - A. The integrity of Job (1:1–5)
 - B. The first test (1:6–22)
 - C. The second test (2:1–10)
- II. **Dialogue: Job, His Suffering, and His Standing before God (3:1–42:6)**
 - A. Job: despair for the day of his birth (3:1–26)
 - B. The friends and Job: can Job be right before God? (4:1–25:6)
 1. First cycle (4:1–14:22)
 2. Second cycle (15:1–21:34)
 3. Third cycle (22:1–25:6)
 - C. Job: the power of God, place of wisdom, and path of integrity (26:1–31:40)
 - D. Elihu: suffering as a discipline (32:1–37:24)
 - E. Challenge: the Lord answers Job (38:1–42:6)
 1. The first challenge: understanding the universe (38:1–40:2)
 2. Job’s response: silence (40:3–5)
 3. The second challenge: understanding justice and power (40:6–41:34)
 4. Job’s response: submission (42:1–6)
- III. **Epilogue: The Vindication, Intercession, and Restoration of Job (42:7–17)**
 - A. The Lord rebukes the three friends (42:7–9)
 - B. The Lord restores Job (42:10–17)

LESSONS/OBSERVATIONS

- Notice how (in light of last week’s class) what could have been said in a paragraph is teased out in majestic story
- *An answer (of sorts) is given to us, but is not given to Job.* There is a Devil, God has sovereign purposes. However, a complete Theodicy (the vindication of God in regards to the problem of evil) is not given.
- *A basically right principle with a wrong universal conclusion* – God rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked - therefore – reward must mean the person is righteous and punishment must mean person is wicked. We have to be careful in accessing others’ lives.
- *A truly righteous man’s response to heavy affliction* – there is not a Stoical kind of suffering, but *deep* responses of grief, sorrow and questioning. However, it is by faith that he perseveres. In the end, Job is rewarded with double of all (including children).
- *It is a sight of God that helps settle us in affliction, even if He doesn’t answer the questions.*
- *What if the righteous couldn’t suffer and the wicked couldn’t be prospered – there could be no Gospel!*

¹ Taken and simplified from the *ESV Study Bible*, Crossway Publishers.