



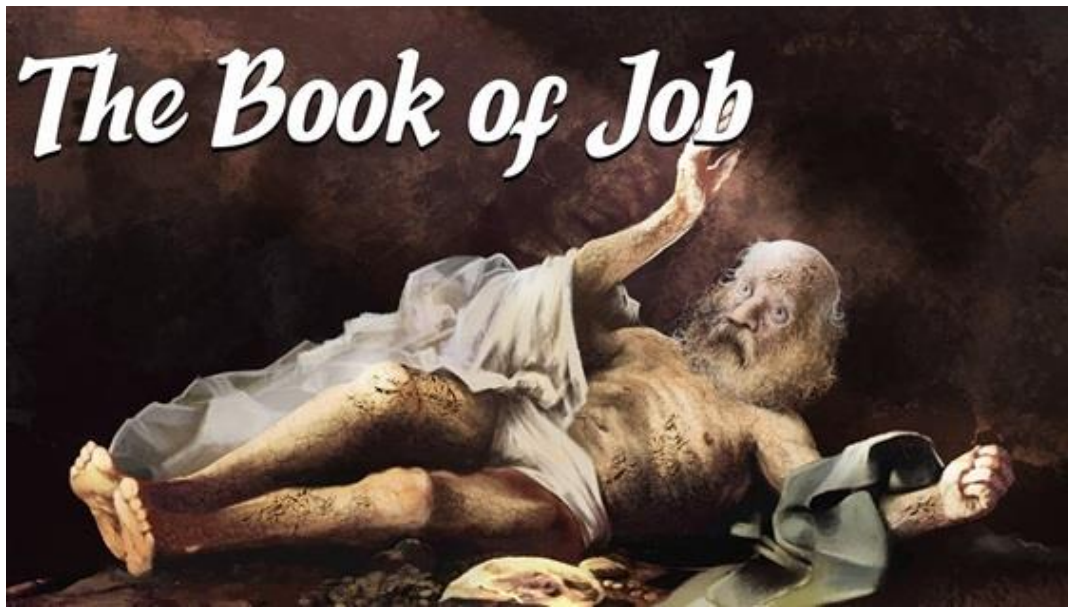
## **My Drift**

**Title: Bible – The Book of Job**

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The Book of Job is an important part of the Bible because it asks one of the most commonly asked questions: if God is good, how come he allows evil and suffering to exist in the world?

### **Book of Job Summary**

Job is that Old Testament book that we tend to turn to in times when we're bewildered at our life circumstances that are so painful and so difficult to understand. And as we turn to that book, we expect to find comfort and explanation as to why things are happening to us and what God's plan is in the whole scheme of things.

### **What we initially get from Job**

But what do we get when we open our Bibles to the book of Job? We get a book of 42 chapters that begins and ends with a story – which is easy enough to read and understand. But after the second chapter and running through to the middle of the 42nd chapter of this book we have an extended section of poetry – of all things!

And we're introduced to men with unusual names from places we're not familiar with. They and Job go back and forth in spinning Hebrew poetry with one another for chapter after chapter. Then a young man steps forward and he gives us more Hebrew poetry. Then God shows up and points to all sorts of natural phenomena. Job repents. God restores his blessings to Job. And that's how the book ends.

And you wouldn't be blamed if you're sitting there at the end of reading this book scratching your head. You came to this book because you were hoping to find some answers to your questions. You came to find out "why?" Why did this happen? Why am I – who am righteous by God's grace – suffering? Why does a God who loves me put me through difficult things that involve real pain?

And the reality is that you don't get those questions answered in this book. So, what good – then – is the book of Job? If it doesn't help you understand what's going on, why did God put it in the Bible in the first place?

### Structure and Message of Job

So, let's examine the structure of this book and read some of the text in order to discover God's overall message for you in this book. What does God have for you and me in this ancient book that we just naturally tend to turn to in our distresses?

### Job Chapter 1 – Job was a wealthy and good man who lost everything.



**Verse 1 - There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil. He was a genuinely righteous man.**

**Verses 2-5 speak of all the material blessings with which God blessed this righteous man. Ten children (7 sons and 3 daughters) – who all had good relationships with one another – and an abundance of livestock. Job was one of the greatest men of the east. He was the greatest out of all the men in his region. He was so incredibly blessed. He was godly. What could go wrong?**

### **First Heavenly Gathering**

**Well, in verse 6 we have the first of two heavenly gatherings where all the angels appear before the Lord – and even Satan (who himself is an angel) shows up. God brings the righteous Job to Satan’s attention and Satan argues with God that Job would stop worshipping God if God were to take all of his material blessings away.**

**So, God allows Satan to take all that Job has. Starting in Job 1:13 we see everything that Job had taken from him – his oxen, donkeys, sheep, camels, servants, and children are all taken from him in one day.**

**Job’s exemplary response in Job 1:20-21 is humble, sorrowful worship of the Lord who gave and took away – and whose name is to be blessed. Job doesn’t understand why any of this happened. But he still trusts the Lord.**

### **Job Chapter 2 – Job receives even greater suffering.**

#### **Second Heavenly Meeting**

**Well, there’s another heavenly meeting in Job 2:1. The Lord again brings Job to Satan’s attention and points to how Job continues to worship the Lord even though Satan moved the Lord to take all of Job’s material possessions from him.**

**Satan counters though that if God takes Job’s health, Job won’t worship him anymore. So, God allows Satan to touch Job’s body without taking his life.**

**So, in Job 2:7 we see Job miserable with boils all over his body, sitting in what would have been the area’s garbage dump, scraping his infected and itchy skin with broken pieces of pottery. His wife has even had enough in Job 2:9 and basically encourages Job to do what Satan said, he would do – to curse God and**

die. But Job remains steadfast in the face of all of this. He still doesn't understand why this is happening. But he continues to trust God.



**Three friends arrive and sit in silence.**

But just then he has three friends show up! And they've come with the express purpose of comforting him! Just what Job needs! So, we see them in Job 2:13 sitting in the ash heap with Job for 7 days – none of them saying a word. And that's the end of the prose section – or the story section – of this book.

### **Job Chapter 3 - Job is absolutely miserable and curses the day of his birth.**

Even though Job is still a man of integrity and has not cursed God, Job is absolutely miserable.

Job curses the day of his birth. In fact, he makes it a point to curse both the day and the night of his first day of life (Job 3:3-9). Job then wishes he was never born (Job 3:10-12) but that instead he would have died before birth (Job 3:13-19). He laments being given life at all (Job 3:20-23) and he ends the chapter by reflecting on the fact that all of what he's said in chapter 3 is because of his miserable circumstances (Job 3:24-26).

### **Job Chapters 4 and 5 - Eliphaz Speaks**

In response to Job's lament in chapter 3, his first friend – Eliphaz says, “I pray thee, whoever perished, being innocent?”



**In other words, Eliphaz reminds Job of this supposed truth that is accepted by all of Job's friends – and even Job himself to some extent – that the righteous and the innocent never perish. They're never cut off. That is what these men are all truly believing at this point.**

**And it's clear through the rest of these middle chapters of this book that this is the worldview of Job's three friends. It's called the Retribution Theology. It's the belief that good people are always blessed, and bad people are always punished – and both of these happen pretty much immediately in this life. It's kind of like the mistaken notion of karma – do good, get good. Do bad, get bad. What goes around comes around.**

**But the “problem” with trying to explain Job's situation using the Retribution principle is that we just saw in the first two chapters of this book that Job's situation doesn't fit with his friends' theology. Job actually is righteous. We know that – without a doubt. And yet, he's suffering. Why?**

**So, from outward appearance – all that the human eye can see – it looks to Job's friends through their lens of Retribution-thinking that Job is receiving the penalty of being personally wicked.**

**Eliphaz goes on to accuse Job of secretly being wicked. What other explanation could he have for someone suffering so much? They've got to be wicked! This is how God works in the world, isn't it??**

### **Eliphaz's Solution**

**Eliphaz has an out for Job. Here's what he advises Job to do in Job 5:8:**

- **First, Job needs to stop his secret sinning, which is supposedly bringing down God's judgement on him.**
- **And second, Job needs to pray to God – which apparently the friends think he stopped doing.**

**But the problem with that approach is that Job wasn't secretly sinning, and he was praying to God. And because of that, the three friends are not able to fit Job and his situation into their theology. But they're certainly not about to change their theology in order to match the reality of how God really works in this world.**

### **Job Chapters 6 and 7 - Job Responds to Eliphaz**

**Job appeals to his friends to be kind to him. He says he wants reproof – but that what Eliphaz has said is no help to him because it was merely an attack against a suffering man who admits that he’s saying things that aren’t quite right. Job appeals his own righteousness to the friends and to God. He expresses deep distress over the fact that God is seeming to punish him for no cause and won’t leave him alone in that regard.**

### **Job Chapter 8 - Bildad Speaks**

**But if Job is looking for compassion from his friends, then he’s sorely disappointed by what his second friend Bildad has to say in chapter 8 where he begins his salvo with this “compassionate” note:**

*“How long wilt thou speak these things? And how long shall the words of thy mouth be like a strong wind?”*

**Bildad starts by insulting Job because he thinks that Job is impugning God’s character. Bildad goes on to speculate that Job’s children sinned and that’s why God killed them. Bildad’s simplistic solution for Job to get out of the suffering he’s in includes – of course – seeking God, praying to him, and becoming pure and upright – all of which Job had been doing. Bildad guarantees that if Job does these things, that God will turn to him again and bless him. He even pulls out the wisdom of the ancients to prove his point. Then he goes on to insinuate that Job is a godless hypocrite who has forgotten God. But if Job simply follows Bildad’s fool-proof plan to get out of this suffering by confessing sins – which he hasn’t committed – and by praying – which he already does, then his end will be gloriously bright!**

### **Job Chapter 9 - Job Responds to Bildad**

**Job then responds to Bildad in Job 9:2 by basically conceding that what Bildad says is right. Job himself bought into the idea that good is always rewarded and evil is always punished, usually immediately in this life. But then Job wonders how to be back in God’s good graces.**

**Here’s Job’s thought process: If God punishes evil and rewards good ... and yet Job is seeming to be punished ... therefore Job is wicked ... but he’s not wicked ... therefore Job ought to be blessed ... but God isn’t blessing him anymore ... then why is God not holding to his end of the bargain? Is something wrong with God? Is God ignorant? Is God ... unrighteous?**

**That's the dangerous territory that Job starts entering in chapter 9. This leads Job to wonder how he could get a hearing before God to plead his case that he's not wicked and should thus stop being punished by God as though he were. It's as if in Job's mind God needs to be more perfectly informed of Job's situation. Job acknowledges God's awesome power but then despairs of ever getting a hearing from this all-powerful God – who seems to have hidden himself from Job. And not only hidden himself – but God in Job's mind has become violently oppressive toward him.**

**At some point, Job starts to recognize the error of Retribution Theology – or at least the part that states that God always blesses the righteous. In Job 9:22, Job says ...**

**God destroys both the perfect and the wicked. But that contradicts what his three friends and even Job himself have been believing. Job continues to muse on the fact that God seems to keep punishing him though he has done nothing to deserve the punishment. So, Job actually starts entertaining the idea of meeting God in court and settling their dispute with a mediator between them to negotiate.**

### **Job Chapter 10 – Job wants a meeting with God.**

**Job demands that God answer him and tell him why he's being punished. Job goes on to suggest something that even Job knows is ridiculous – namely, that God is somehow limited in his knowledge of Job's situation like a mere mortal would be. But then Job verbally and emotionally walks back from the brink of cursing God, and he recalls how God has been good in creating him and blessing him in his earlier days. But those sweet thoughts give way once more as Job laments God's current treatment of him. Job actually ends chapter 10 with a desperate plea for God to just leave him alone.**

### **Job Chapter 11 - Zophar Speaks**

**And of course, these provocative statements of the suffering Job further raise the ire of his friends. And so, the last of these three men – Zophar – speaks. He begins with this accusation:**

- **Should not the multitude of words be answered?**
- **And should a man full of talk be justified?**

**So, the contradictions to Retribution Theology that Job has uncovered are just dismissed as a “multitude of words” and mere “talk.” Zophar goes on to accuse Job of engaging in lying and mocking with his words to his friends and to God.**

**Zophar rebukes Job and says that he wishes that God would speak – just like Job was wishing – but Zophar wants God to speak and to condemn Job for his supposed secret sins that are moving God to punish him. Zophar says that God is transcendent and immense and not to be called to account by anyone. And Zophar – like the other two so-called friends – offers Job a remedy to his predicament. Start praying and stop sinning. Then everything will be great. But Zophar ends with a final dire reminder that if Job doesn't get with the Retribution Theology plan, then he can expect only bad things.**

### **Job Chapter 12 - Job Responds to Zophar**

**Job responds in Job 12:1-2 with this sarcastic but understandable outburst after the worthless advice of all three friends:**

*“No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you.”*

### **Job Chapters 13-30 – Conversations between Job and his friends**

**A total of 658 verses are taken up with this round-and-round dialogue. Which is a picture of the futility and frustration that accompanies trying to figure out the deep issues of life without having a word from God on the matter.**

### **Job Chapters 31-37 - Elihu Speaks**





**31:40 The words of Job are ended.**

**32:1 So these three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes.**

**Then was kindled the wrath of Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the kindred of Ram: against Job was his wrath kindled, because he justified himself rather than God. Also against his three friends was his wrath kindled, because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job. Now Elihu had waited till Job had spoken, because they were elder than he. When Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of these three men, then his wrath was kindled.**

**Job stops talking. The friends stop talking. Job is righteous in his own eyes. And indeed Job was righteous – even in God’s eyes. But the friends just have nothing more to say – finally!**

**Since the friends couldn’t help Job trust God, this young man Elihu is going to give it a try. Out of deference to their age he waited to speak. But now that they’re silent he can move in. And so, Elihu speaks uninterrupted from Job Chapters 32-37.**

**He says that he waited for the older men to speak first but is now realizing that age isn’t the real factor in how wise a person is. Rather the spirit of God is the one who gives real wisdom.**

**Then in Job 33, Elihu says that Job should listen to him. He then proceeds to summarize what Job has said thus far – demonstrating that unlike the friends he was actually listening to Job. Elihu correctly points out that Job has maintained his innocence but in the process he has impugned God’s character by claiming that God is making up false pretenses by which he’s then punishing Job. Elihu’s answer is threefold.**

- **First, he rightly states that we can’t fully understand God’s ways.**
- **Second, one of God’s prerogatives is to warn people of their ways which are contrary to him.**
- **And third, God sends suffering into people’s lives in the hope that sinners will repent. Elihu finishes that chapter by challenging Job to answer or – if he can’t answer – to keep listening to him.**

**In Job 34, Elihu again states what he heard Job say – namely, that God has denied the righteous Job the justice due him. In response to this flawed idea, Elihu defends God’s righteousness and the rightness of his ways.**

**In Job 35, Elihu takes Job to task for starting to think that it doesn't matter what kind of life a person lives since whether a person is good or bad they are subject to God sending suffering into their life. Elihu replies that God is personally unaffected by a person's righteousness or sin. Mankind is affected by those things, but God isn't. Therefore, Elihu implies that God's dealing with Job is not based on Job's own personal sin or righteousness. Further, Elihu encourages Job to wait for God and not be impatient for what appears to be a delay in God hearing and answering him. And he ends the chapter by questioning and challenging the idea that what God is doing to Job is correctly interpreted as punishment.**

**Elihu in chapter 36 urges Job to stop comparing what he's receiving to what he thinks the wicked ought to receive. He strongly advises Job not to question God's execution of justice in the world. Elihu then finishes the 36th and 37th chapters of this book leading Job and us to consider that when we're suffering and tempted to question God's character and wisdom – we need to consider his work. We need to think about what God does. And when we do that, we can see that his work is ultimately beyond our understanding. And what we need to learn from that is that if his work – which we can see – is beyond our understanding... then what else of what he's doing – in your life – might be beyond your understanding?**

**Job Chapters 38-41 - God finally speaks to Job.**



**God spoke to Job from a whirlwind.**

Then starting in Job 38, God rather seamlessly takes over from Elihu and probes Job on something like 84 areas of his creation – including an extended treatment of two creatures that God created and manages – one a rather large and care-free land creature he calls Behemoth and the other a very fierce and dangerous sea creature he calls Leviathan.

In Job 40-41, God said to Job, “You wanted to argue with God All-Powerful. You wanted to correct me and prove that I was wrong. So, give me your answer!”

### **Job Chapter 42 - Job Responds to God**

Job responds in humility and repentance, realizing he really doesn't understand how God works in this world. Job doesn't understand how God started this creation. He doesn't understand how God keeps this creation going. And more directly for Job, he doesn't understand how or why God works in certain ways in his life – especially the ways that are unpleasant.

### **Job Restored**

At the end of this book in Job 42 God rebukes Job's three friends and restores all the blessings that Job originally had. Actually, he gives Job double what he formerly had. Here is what the bible says:

*The Lord blessed Job with even more than he had in the beginning. Job got 14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, 2,000 oxen and 1,000 donkeys. Job was healed and his health restored after he forgave his 'friends' and prayed to God to forgive them as well. He also had seven sons and three beautiful daughters. Job lived for 140 years more. He lived to see his children, his grandchildren, and his great grandchildren. Job lived to be a very old man who had lived a good, long life.*

*What happened to Job's wife? She later comes back and pleads with Job to be allowed to go into the rubble of the Palace to recover the dead bodies of her children. Job tells her that they must be left, and she takes herself off to lie amongst the cattle where she dies. The children born at the end of Job's suffering are to a different wife, who is identified as Dinah, daughter of Jacob.*

Now understand – God doesn't bless Job here because Job confessed sins he didn't commit or because he started praying when he had been doing so all along – as the three friends kept urging Job to do. Rather, God was able to bless Job because Job had come to the point where though he still couldn't understand, he came to trust.

### **The Message of the Book of Job**

And that is the message of this book for us. When you can't understand, trust. Job couldn't understand why he was suffering. The three friends couldn't understand either. But all four of these folks pretended to understand – but they were all quite wrong. God didn't want them to understand. In fact, God never explains to Job why he was suffering.

What did God want from Job and his three friends? He wanted them to trust him – that he knew what he was doing; that he was good; that he was wise and in control of everything.



### **What is the main message in the Book of Job?**

So, while we do not always know why we suffer, we can bring our pain and grief to God and trust that he is wise and knows what he's doing. The book of Job invites us to trust God's wisdom and character no matter our circumstances.

### **What is the moral of the story of Job?**

The moral of the story is that people must have faith in God even in adversity. People cannot know everything happening in the universe and therefore cannot know why certain things happen.

### **Applying the Book of Job**

So, what in your life can you not understand? What has God done – and God has indeed done it – that you just can't figure out? What are you struggling with? What causes you to question God's goodness and love and power and wisdom in your life?



**You are going to encounter situations in this life where you simply will not be able to understand. You might even go to your grave not understanding why – why did God do this to you? Why did God allow that person to do that to you? Why did God put you in that painful situation? Why? Why? Why?**

**You won't understand. And that's OK. Because God's not calling you to understand in this life. He's calling you to trust. Trust him. Trust his character – that he's good and loving. Trust his wisdom – that he knows the best path for you. That he has your best and eternal interests at heart.**

**Question – Is Satan an Angel? And what was he doing at these heavenly meetings?**

**Satan, also known as the Devil or Lucifer is an entity in Abrahamic religions that seduces humans into sin or falsehood. In Christianity and Islam, he is usually seen as a fallen angel who has rebelled against God, who nevertheless allows him temporary power over the fallen world and a host of demons.**

**Lucifer is regarded within the Latter Day Saint movement as the pre-mortal name of the devil. Mormon theology teaches that in a heavenly council, Lucifer rebelled against the plan of God the Father and was subsequently cast out.**



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