

# JOB

## JOB 1-3 — THEME AND OUTLINE

The theme of Job seems to be the meaning and object of evil and suffering under the government of a holy, wise and merciful God, and may be outlined thus:

The Prologue (chaps. 1-2, in prose)

The Dialogue (chaps. 3-31, in poetry)

The Words of Elihu (chaps. 32-37, in poetry)

The Words of the Almighty (chaps. 38-41, in poetry)

The Response of (42:1-6, in poetry)

The Epilogue (42:7-17, in prose)

### THE KEY TO THE BOOK

The key to the book is found in the first chapter, which, after an introductory testimony to Job, translates the reader to heavenly scenes (v. 6).

The sons of God are angelic beings bringing in their reports to God, the mystery being that Satan is found "also among them." How the prince of darkness is granted access to God is a question these lessons cannot discuss; but we accept the fact and draw certain inferences therefrom.

He is seen here in his scriptural attitude of the accuser of the brethren; and when God taunts him, if one may so say, with the uprightness of Job whom he has been unable to corrupt, he at once charges him with a mercenary spirit, and declares that if God were to take his temporal blessings away from him he would be as bad as the rest.

God accepts the challenge and puts His servant into the hands of Satan for a period, and for the exercise of a terrible but limited power, that it may be seen if the charge be true.

In other words, it is not Job so much who is on trial as God. It is not a question of Job's loyalty so much as one of God's power. Is the grace of God able to keep one of His servants faithful to Him, though he be stripped of everything which men count dear?

The outcome was victory for God, and discomfiture for Satan, under circumstances calculated to prove a great comfort to God's people in every generation. This thought is suggested by the prologue, and which, kept in mind, lightens up the whole book.

### THE DISCUSSION

The dialogue proceeds on the question whether great suffering such as Job's be not an evidence of great sin, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar affirming and Job denying. The dispute is carried on in a series of three acts, each containing three arguments of the "friends" and as many defenses by Job, until the last, when Zophar is silenced, and Job apparently triumphs.

Job's defense is based on two grounds,

- (1) the admitted prosperity of the wicked, chapter 21, and
- (2) his own personal righteousness, chapters 29 and 31.

It would seem at first that his friends intended to comfort him, but were driven to accusation by the caustic character of his replies, caused no doubt, by his intense suffering. Whether his friends were sincere or insincere at the beginning must be determined by the view taken of chapter four. It can be so read as to suggest either view.

The words of Elihu also suggest a series of three acts, out of which we gather that he rebuked both parties to the debate, the friends for their accusations, which were unwarranted in great measure, and Job for his self-righteousness, equally unwarranted (32:1-3). His philosophy of the sufferings differs from the others in that he believes they were sent for the good of the sufferer (see ~~Job~~ Job 33:28-30). The first part of his speech is addressed to Job (chaps. 32-33); the second to the three friends (chap. 34); and the last to Job again (chaps. 35-37). As he closes a thunder storm is gathering, whose description forms a grand climax to his address. Out of it the voice of the Almighty is heard.

## THE VOICE OF THE ALMIGHTY

The discussion thus far had been confined to the mystery of evil, and the balance is now restored by considering the mystery of good which the Almighty reveals. It is notable that He gives no explanation of Job's suffering, renders no decision on the subject in debate, and offers no hint of compensation to His servant for what he has endured.

The pervading idea of His revelation is that of power, absolute sovereignty, as though His design were to overwhelm Job and effect his unconditional surrender. The crisis in Job's life was like that of Moses as he stood in the cleft of the rock (<sup><230></sup>Exodus 33-34) or Elijah at Horeb (<sup><1190></sup>1 Kings 19), or Paul on his way to Damascus (<sup><400></sup>Acts 9), and the result in Job's case is not unlike that in their cases.

Meditation on the book leads to the conclusion that such experiences as those of Job, and they come to every true child of God, may be for discipline and to teach submission so vital to be learned, but also to serve a purpose far exceeding human knowledge, in the superhuman world. Compare <sup><800></sup>John 9:3; <sup><400></sup>1 Corinthians 4:9; <sup><800></sup>Ephesians 3:10; and <sup><600></sup>1 Peter 1:12. What a dignity such a thought adds to the suffering for righteousness' sake!

## QUESTIONS

1. What is the theme of Job?
2. What is its outline?
3. What seems to be the key of the book?
4. How does Elihu's philosophy of suffering differ from that of the others?
5. For what three purposes may such affliction come on any saint of God?
6. Concerning the last purpose named, have you examined the Scripture passages indicated?

## THE LITERARY STYLE OF JOB

We have spoken of Job as in the poetic style, and something should be said about that style as applying not only to Job, but to the other poetical books

of the Old Testament like Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Solomon and Lamentations.

While these books are poetical, to English readers neither the sound of the words nor the form in which they are printed in the King James Version, would suggest that idea.

As to the form, the Revised Version is an improvement, though it leaves much to be desired. As to the sound, the rhythm of Hebrew poetry is not found in it but in the recurrence of the thought. Thought may be rhythmic as well as sound or language, and the full force of Scripture is not grasped by one who does not feel how thoughts can be emphasized by being differently re-stated.

### LITERARY PARALLELISMS

The grand peculiarity of Hebrew poetry, however, is the parallelism, a form of composition somewhat artificial, consisting in the repetition of the main thought, usually with some modification of it.

These parallelisms are of three classes — the synonymous, the antithetic and the synthetic.

In the synonymous parallelism the second clause is scarcely more than a repetition of the first, although there are many varieties of it so far as the length of the members is concerned. A good illustration of this parallelism is found in <sup><RB></sup>Job 6:5:

*Doth the wild ass bray over his grass?  
Doth the ox low over his fodder?*

The antithetic parallelism is one in which the idea in the second clause is the converse of that in the first, a simple form of which is <sup><RB></sup>Proverbs 10:1:

*A wise son rejoiceth his father;  
But a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.*

In the synthetic parallelism the poet instead of echoing the former sentiment or placing it in contrast, enforces his thought by accessory ideas and modifications. For example, a general proposition is stated and the sentiment is then dwelt upon in detail. A specimen is found in <sup><RB></sup>Job 3:3-5:

*O that the day might have perished in which I was born,  
 And the night which said, "A male child is conceived."  
 Let that day be darkness,  
 Let not God inquire after it from on high!  
 Yea, let not the light shine upon it!  
 Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it;  
 Let a cloud dwell upon it,  
 Let whatever darkens the day terrify it!*

## QUESTIONS

1. In what is the rhythm of Hebrew poetry?
2. What is meant by a literary parallelism?
3. Name and define the three leading classes of parallelisms.

## JOB 4-14 — FIRST SERIES OF THE DEBATE

The first series of the debate may be outlined as follows:

1. With Eliphaz (chaps. 4-7)
  - a. Speech of Eliphaz (chaps. 4-5) b. Reply of (chaps. 6-7)
2. With Bildad (chaps. 8-10)
  - a. Speech of Bildad (chap. 8)
  - b. Reply of Job (chaps. 9-10)
3. With Zophar (chaps. 11-14)
  - a. Speech of Zophar (chap. 11) b. Reply of Job (chaps. 12-14)

It is thought the debate may have occupied several days, by which supposition some of the difficulties of the book are removed. In the first place, this leads to the opinion that the addresses were not impromptu, but that each speaker had time for the composition of his finished utterances in reply to the one who went before him.

In the second place, it throws light on the authorship of the book, because all the author had to do was to prepare the introductory and concluding historical statements, and then collect and arrange the speeches that had been actually made. These speeches would be preserved in the memory, and the

work of the editor would be rather that of a compiler than an original author, although he may have been as inspired for the one work as for the other.

The debate is occasioned by the complaints of Job recorded in chapter 3, and up to which time his friends had been silent.

### **ELIPHAZ AND JOB**

Eliphaz commences with delicacy and candor, showing the inconsistency of a good man's repining under discipline, and advances the position that the truly righteous are never overthrown, while the wicked are always dealt with according to their sins. He establishes his position by a vision, and while he does not apply all he has said to Job, he yet leaves no doubt that it was intended for him, advising him to turn to God that he may find happiness and come to an honored old age.

Job replies justifying himself for complaining. He wishes he might die. His friends have disappointed him. They are a deceitful brook, but if they would use reasonable arguments he would listen to them. He describes his sufferings as one pursued of God, exhibiting much impatience.

### **BILDAD AND JOB**

Bildad, who is provokingly severe, replies in chapter 8. Job is wicked and his children have been cut off for their wickedness. He exhorts him to repent and enforces his exhortations by the opinions of other men.

Job's reply covers chapters 9-10, and being calm at first he acknowledges God's supremacy and admits his own imperfection. The arguments of his friends, however, cannot be defended. He refers to his sorrows again and complains that God treats him as if he were a guilty man. His excitement grows until he again expresses the desire for death.

### **ZOPHAR AND JOB**

Zophar, like Bildad, is somewhat violent. In his eyes Job has no sense, whom he rebukes for maintaining innocence before God. Zophar's language is magnificent when he treats the supremacy of God, but like the others, he exhorts Job to acknowledge his sins that he may find prosperity and peace.

The debate is closed by Job, who groups his opponents and answers them as a whole. He is sarcastic. He follows their example in quoting a number of proverbial sayings. He attacks their motives. Their arguments were unsound. They were mocking God by defending His government in such a way as they had done. They had cause for fear and trembling in consequence of this. He wishes that he might present his case directly before God rather than the tribunal of man. He would ask of God only two things, that He would withdraw His hand from him and not overawe him by His great power. His calamities are overwhelming, and he concludes with a pathetic description of the frailty and uncertainty of human life.

### QUESTIONS

To those using these lessons in classes, the author recommends that they employ each reference to any of the speeches as a basis for a question or questions on the text of the chapter as follows:

1. How does Eliphaz show delicacy of speech? How does he allude to the inconsistency of repining under discipline in the case of a good man? In which verses does he advance the position that the righteous are never overthrown? In which does he teach the opposite to this concerning the wicked? Can you give the details of his vision? Name the verses in chapter 5 in which he exhorts Job to turn to God. Name the verses in which he encourages him to do this.
2. How does Job express his desire for death in chapter 6? In what language does he express his feelings towards his friends? How is his impatience with God illustrated?
3. Give some illustrations of Bildad's severity. In what verses of chapter 8 does he draw comparisons from earlier authorities?
4. Give some illustrations of God's supremacy in chapter 9.
5. Give some illustrations of Job's sense of imperfection. Give some illustrations of his increased excitement towards the close of chapter 10.
6. Why should Zophar be described as violent? Give two or three illustrations of Zophar's magnificent description of God. In what language does he exhort Job to acknowledge his sins?
7. Indicate Job's sarcasm in chapter 12. How does he attack the motives of his opponents and the unsoundness of their arguments? In what

language does he warn them? Give the verse in chapter 13 where he appeals directly to God. What language in chapter 14 justifies the last sentence in the text of our lesson?

## JOB 15-21 — SECOND SERIES OF THE DEBATE

1. With Eliphaz (chaps. 15-17)
  - a. Speech of Eliphaz (chap. 15) b. Reply of Job (chaps. 16-17)
2. With Bildad (chaps. 18-19)
  - a. Speech of Bildad (chap. 18) b. Reply of Job (chap. 19)
3. With Zophar (chaps. 20-21)
  - a. Speech of Zophar (chap. 20) b. Reply of Job (chap. 21)

The second series of the debate is in the same order as the first, and with the same question in view.

### ELIPHAZ AND JOB

Eliphaz opens in chapter 15. Job is accused of vehemence and vanity; of casting off fear and restraining prayer; of arrogance and presumption.

God is vindicated by him, and the observation of the sages are quoted. A number of pithy and instructive sayings are used to show that wicked men are subject to sudden alarms and unhappy experiences.

Job replies, renewing his complaint of the way his friends have treated him, and of the intensity and injustice of his sufferings. His appeal is to God before whom his eyes pour out tears. In chapter 17 he prophesies that his trials will yet be a subject of amazement to good men.

### BILDAD AND JOB

Bildad speaks in chapter 18 repeating the former accusation. In his estimation the laws of God's administration are fixed and it is an established principle that the wicked shall be punished in this life, which he illustrates by a number of maxims or proverbs. The student should enumerate these and distinguish between them.



There is nothing new in what Bildad says, but he is enforcing what he has previously advanced with greater emphasis.

In chapter 19 Job speaks more pathetically, exhibiting his character in a beautiful light. His language is sorrowful, his spirit tender and subdued. How long will his friends vex and crush him with their remarks? God has overthrown him, fenced up his way, put away his friends. Even his wife and children are estranged from him.

Then, there follows the most noble declaration in the book. Conscious of the importance of what he is about to say, he asks that his words might be engraved on the eternal rock, and then professes his confidence in God and his assurance that he would yet appear and vindicate his character. Though now consumed by disease, and though this process should go on till all his flesh was wasted away, yet he had the conviction that God would appear on the earth to deliver him, and that with renovated flesh and in prosperity, he would be permitted to see God for himself.

### **ZOPHAR AND JOB**

Zophar recapitulates the old arguments under a new form, and Job replies, closing the second series of the debate. All his strength is collected for this argument as though resolved to answer them once for all. He appeals to facts. The wicked live, grow old, become mighty in power, etc. They openly cast off God and prosper in an irreligious life, although, as he admits, there are some exceptions. They are reserved, however, for the day of destruction and a future retribution they cannot escape.

### **QUESTIONS**

For questions, teachers are referred to what was said at the close of the preceding lesson. Examine the text of the chapters by the help of the various sentences and clauses of the lesson. Ask yourself or your classes for example:

1. In what language does Eliphaz accuse Job of vehemence and vanity?
2. How many verses are taken up with these accusations?
3. To how many sages of ancient times does he refer, or how many of their observations does he quote?
4. Point out the literary beauty of some of these observations.

5. Discover the verse of verses in which Job prophesies the acquaintance of later generations with the story of his trial.
6. Count and distinguish between the maxims or proverbs of Bildad.
7. Memorize ~~18925~~ Job 19:25-27.
8. How many indisputable facts does Job refer to in chapter 21?

## JOB 22-31 — THIRD SERIES OF THE DEBATE

1. With Eliphaz (chaps. 22-24)
  - a. Speech of Eliphaz (chap. 22)
  - b. Reply of Job (chaps. 23-24)
2. With Bildad (chaps. 25-26)
  - a. Speech of Bildad (chap. 25)
  - b. Reply of Job (chap. 26)
3. With Zophar (chaps. 27-31)
  - a. Continuation of the reply of Job (chaps. 27-31)

The last speech Eliphaz makes, chapter 22, is a grand effort to refute Job based upon the latter's appeal to facts. There is more severity in it than he has shown before. He charges Job with cruelty, oppression and injustice as a magistrate. Therefore, no wonder such calamities had come upon him. Using the deluge as an illustration, he shows how God must deal with the wicked according to their deserts. Job is exhorted to acquaint himself with God and be at peace with Him, and all might yet be well.

Job replies pathetically. He has no human help, but turns to God. Oh, that he might come before him! He cannot seem to find Him, yet he has confidence in Him. His own integrity is once more asserted. It was not true that God always dealt with men on earth in accordance with their character. The wicked often have long prosperity, though he admits they will ultimately be cut off.

Bildad attempts a reply in chapter 25, and yet he seems to realize that the controversy is decided, for he contents himself simply with a description of the power, wisdom and majesty of God, closing with the sentiment

expressed before concerning the comparative impurity and insignificance of man. Bildad has, in fact, yielded the argument and retires from the field.

Job speaks in chapter 26 in a strain of irony. His friends have not enlightened him very much. His own views of the greatness of God are superior to those of Bildad. Notice the sublime description of the divine majesty which follows.

Zophar should have replied, but his lips are closed, and Job himself proceeds more calmly in chapters 27-31. Once more he refers to the government of God, giving a most beautiful description of the search for wisdom, detailing the discoveries of science in his time, and saying that none of them could disclose it, and concluding that true wisdom can only be found in the fear of the Lord. Once more he maintains his integrity, and concludes that if God would come forth and pronounce a just judgment on him, he would take the decision and bind it on his head as a diadem, and march forth with it in triumph.

### QUESTIONS

1. What illustrates the greater severity of Eliphaz?
2. How is Job's magisterial function referred to?
3. In what verses is the deluge spoken of?
4. Under what terms does Job affirm his integrity?
5. Quote some of the irony of Job.
6. Name some of the scientific discoveries of Job's day.
7. How beautifully is the search for wisdom described?

### JOB 32-41 — WORDS OF ELIHU; WORDS OF GOD

Elihu now comes forward with apparent modesty, and yet great pretensions. Young and inexperienced, he is nevertheless indignant at the manner in which the friends of Job have sought to reply to him. Professing that his views have been revealed from above, he undertakes to clear up all the difficulties in the case. Afflictions are for the good of the sufferer is his dictum, a thought which he exhibits in various lights.

He, too, reflects upon Job for his rashness and presumption, leaning rather to the side of his friends.

Chapter 32 is introductory, but in the following chapter he fully enters upon his argument. If Job had wished to bring his cause before God, let him now present it to him, i.e., Elihu, who assumed to take God's place. Job could not be correct in the claims he made for himself because God must be more righteous than man. Gods speaks to man in various ways to withdraw him from his purpose and save him from sin.

Job is not disposed to reply, although Elihu gives him an opportunity, and therefore the latter continues in chapter 34 to examine his case more particularly. Job had shown a spirit of irreverence which is rebuked. God's government is administered on principles of equity, and therefore Job must be a wicked man who is called upon to confess that his chastisement was just and to resolve to offend no more. In chapter 35, assuming that Job claimed to be more righteous than God, he examines the position, demonstrating its impossibility.

Having undertaken thus to vindicate the divine character, he proceeds in chapters 36-37 to state some of the principles of the divine government, illustrating his views and showing the necessity of man's submission to God by a sublime description of the greatness of the latter, especially as manifested in the storm. There is in this description every indication that a storm is rising and a tempest gathering. In the midst of this tempest the address of Elihu is broken off and the Almighty appears and closes the debate.

### **THE ADDRESS OF THE ALMIGHTY**

The address of the Almighty covers chapters 38-41, and is represented as from the midst of the tempest. Its principle object appears to be to assert God's greatness and majesty and the duty of profound submission to the dispensations of his government. He appeals to His works, showing that man could explain little, and that, therefore, it was to be expected that in His moral government there would be much also above human capacity to understand.

Job is subdued and awed, and confesses his vileness in chapter 40:3-5. To produce, however, a more overpowering impression, and secure a deeper prostration before Him, the Almighty described two of the most

remarkable animals He had made, with which description His sublime address concludes.

We agree with Barnes and other commentators that the general impression sought by this address is that of awe, reverence and submission. That God has a right to do, and that it is presumptuous in man to sit in judgment upon His doings. It is remarkable that God does not refer to the main point in the controversy at all. He does not seek to vindicate His government from the charges brought against it of inequality, nor does He refer to the future state as a place where all these apparent inequalities will be adjusted.

Job is humbled and penitent, chapter 42. His confession is accepted, and his general course approved. His three friends are reprimanded for the severity of their judgment upon him, while he is directed to intercede for them. His calamities are ended and he is restored to double his former prosperity.

Thus God shows Himself the friend of the righteous, and the object of the trial is secured by showing that there is true virtue which is not based on selfishness, and real piety that will bear up under any trial. It shows that God is able to keep the feet of His saints, and that His grace is sufficient for them who put their trust in Him. We speak of Job as triumphant, but the more vital truth is that God is triumphant in the lives of His saints above the power of the evil one.

## QUESTIONS

1. Illustrate Elihu's modesty.
2. Do the same for his pretensions.
3. Show his indignation at the other friends.
4. What is his dictum?
5. How does he reflect on Job?
6. What principles of the divine government does he state?
7. How does he close his speech?
8. What is the chief object of the words of God?
9. How is Job affected by them?
10. For what omissions is God's address remarkable?
11. How is the matter concluded as to Job?
12. How about his friends?