

Introduction to Job

I. Genre and structure

- A. Wisdom literature: Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, some Pss
- B. A book of poetry (chs.3-42:6), with a prose prologue (chs.1-2) and epilogue (ch.42:7ff)
- C. Historicity? Ezek.14:14 / James 5:10-11

II. Theories of authorship and time of writing

- A. Job (or Elihu)?
- B. Moses? (the view of one ancient Jewish source, and some church fathers)
- C. Solomon? (the view of some Jewish rabbis, Gregory Nazianzen [d. 390], and Luther)
- D. A later prophet, like Jeremiah (the view of some modern scholars, comp. ch.3 with Jer.20:14-18?)

III. The life setting of Job

- A. Timeframe: Patriarchal period:
 - 1. Lifespan of Job is like that in patriarchal times (42:16)
 - 2. Wealth measured in livestock, instead of money (1:3; 42:12)
 - 3. Chaldeans were not yet settled, but nomadic raiders (1:17)
 - 4. After Abraham (one of his friends was a Shuhite—2:11 / Gen.25:1-2)
 - 5. After Esau (one of Job's friends was a Temanite—2:11 / Gen. 36:10-11)
 - 6. Before the Exodus (family altar; no Levitical priesthood—1:4-5; 42:8)
 - 7. The name is known from sources outside the Bible.
 - a. The prince of Ashteroth in Bashan, mentioned in the Armana tablets (1350 BC);
 - b. Palestinian chief mentioned in an Egyptian text (2000 BC)
- B. Location: In "The East" (1:3) in the land of Uz (one of Nahor's sons— Gen.22:20-21)
Apparently, Arabia, near or in Edom (judging from Job's Edomite friends)
- C. Religious background:
 - 1. Patriarchal religion with family priest;
 - 2. Job knew the name "Yahweh" ("LORD"), e.g., 1:21; but, more often, spoke of "Eloah" ("God"), and "Shadday" ("the Almighty"), which he and his friends used 23 times.

IV. The story

- A. Job's prosperity and piety (1:1-5)
- B. Satan's malice and God's pride (chs.1-2)
- C. The arrival of three friends (2:11)

- D. Three cycles of debate (chs.3-27)
- E. Job's additional speeches (chs.28-31)
- F. Elihu's four speeches (chs.32-37)
- G. God speaks (chs.38-41)
- H. Job's repentance and latter end (ch.42)

V. Philosophical mysteries explored in the Book of Job

- A. The question debated in heaven: *Why does Job (or any good man) serve God?*
- B. The question debated on earth: *Why does Job (or any good man) suffer?*
 - 1) Reasons rejected by the Book of Job:
 - a. Dualism: two opposite powers governing the universe
 - b. Original Sin: "No man is really righteous"
 - c. Reincarnation settles all inequities
 - 2) Reasons suggested by the Book of Job:
 - a. The role of affliction as a test of faith and loyalty (1:11; 2:5)
 - b. The role of suffering in character formation (23:10)
 - c. Suffering is the price a righteous man pays for some higher good (or for the glory of God)—John 12:27-28).

VI. Questions concerning the book of Job

- A. How did the author know about Satan's wager?
- B. Did these guys really speak in poetry?
- C. Where did Elihu come from?
- D. Through what medium did God speak in the final chapters?
- E. What did Job do wrong, and when did he do it?
- F. In what way did Job "speak rightly of God" where his friends did not?
- G. What mistake did his friends make as grief counselors?

VII. Life lessons from Job

- A. The sovereignty of God over Satan and circumstances
- B. The nature of spiritual warfare
- C. The hidden nearness of God during trials
- D. Human affairs as a spectator sport for the inhabitants of heaven
- E. The need for patience and faith under trial
- F. Human misunderstanding, false accusation and loss of reputation are part of the testing
- G. "There are more things in heaven and earth...Than are dreamt of in your philosophy." (Shakespeare)
- H. A good man's (or woman's) protestations of innocence should be taken at face value.