

Survey of the Old Testament

Job

Introduction:

1. The book of Job contains mostly poetry (chapters 3-41), but some sections of it are written in prose (chapters 1-2, 42).
2. Job is also in a class of literature often called “wisdom literature.” Two other books of the O.T. are usually classified as wisdom – Ecclesiastes and Proverbs. (Some of the Psalms also fit into the wisdom classification). This style of writing attempts to offer practical advice on how to live (Proverbs), and sometimes delves into the deep mysteries of man’s existence (Job and Ecclesiastes).
3. We cannot know the author or the date of this book. Perhaps this anonymity fits the inclusive nature of the contents (i.e., it is not limited by location or era).

Content:

- I. **Prologue (1-2).** Job was an upright man, who served God faithfully. He was an extremely wealthy man. Satan accused God of protecting Job, and that is why Job served him. God allowed Satan to afflict Job, but he could not hurt Job himself. He took all of Job’s livestock and all ten of his children in one day. Job refused to sin. Satan affirmed that Job would curse God if he took away his health, so God allowed him to do so, but he could not take his life. Job still refused to sin against God, even though his wife encouraged him to give up on God. Job’s friends came to comfort him. They sat with him and said nothing.
- II. **Job’s lament (3).** Job wished he had never been born. He then wished that he had died in infancy. He then described his preference to death over life.
- III. **The discussion with Job’s friends (4-31).** There are three cycles where Job’s friends charged him with wrongdoing, and he answered. Consider the first set as an example:
 - A. Cycle One:
 1. Eliphaz spoke (4-5); Job answered (6-7)
 - 1) Eliphaz said that God is greater than man, and Job’s troubles are a punishment from God, and that Job must repent (e.g., 4:7-9).
 - 2) Job insisted that he had done nothing wrong, and rejected Eliphaz’s solution (e.g., 6:24).
 2. Bildad spoke (8); Job answered (9-10)
 - 1) Bildad lashed out at Job, and insisted that God is NOT unjust (e.g., 8:1-6, 20).
 - 2) Job questioned whether anyone can be righteous before God, and asked again for God to explain what he has done wrong (e.g., 10:2).
 3. Zophar spoke (11); Job answered (12-14).
 - 1) Zophar maintained that God’s ways are too difficult for humans to understand, so we must just go on what we know. It’s simple: just

repent and you can turn things around (e.g., 11:1-6, 13-14)

- 2) Job rejected all of this, and still sought audience with God (13:22-24). He stated that he would trust in God even if God killed him (13:15). But then he also added that he would maintain his integrity before God.
- B. All three accused Job of sin. If he would but repent, then God would heal him.
 - C. Job refused to admit to sin; he maintained his integrity throughout; and wished for an audience with God, so that he could plead his case. Job's final comments cover chapters 26-31.
 - a. 31:6 – Job implied that he had been unjustly “measured” (judged). He asked for a fair balance, so that his integrity could be known.
 - b. This demonstrates his mind throughout – he maintained his own integrity, and insisted that he had been treated unfairly. He wanted God to explain things to him. (31:35)

IV. **Elihu spoke (32-37).** Elihu waited until all the others finished, out of respect for their age. He then spoke up because, he said, they have failed to answer Job. In many ways, he seems to say the same things the friends had said, with a slightly different angle.

- A. Job had complained about God's silence, but Elihu maintained that God had been speaking to Job through the pain. The pain was not a punishment, but a warning from God, that Job needed to turn his life around.
- B. Job had complained that God was unjust, but Elihu maintained that God is completely just. Therefore, Job's troubles must be the result of his own sin.
- C. Job longed for the past, so Elihu accused Job of wanting blessings without repentance and seeking after God. Deep piety toward God leads to blessings.
- D. Job complained that God let the wicked prosper, but Elihu maintained that God ought to be praised for the way he runs the world, because of its beauty and complexity.

V. **God's challenge to Job (38-41).**

1. God first asked the question, “Who is this that darkens counsel without knowledge?” He then told Job to stand up and answer his questions.
2. He asked about various aspects of nature. Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? What holds the earth up? Can you explain death? Where is the path of light? Where does darkness stay? Can you make it rain? Snow? Hail? Lightning?
3. He led up to the question in 40:2, “Can you teach the Almighty?”
4. Job admitted that he could not answer such things. God again called upon him to answer.
5. God asked Job if he was right to condemn God to justify himself. He then called upon Job to do a better job of lifting up the righteous and bringing down the wicked. In short, he demanded that Job take over and do better, if he is so righteous (40:8-14).

Epilogue (42)

1. Job finally saw his error in demanding God to answer him (42:1-6). He truly saw God for who he is, and recognized his own lowliness.
2. God rebuked Job's three friends for their wrong answers to Job.
3. He blessed Job with new children and new wealth – more than before.

Lessons learned:

1. We must take our doubts to God rather than allow our doubts to take us away from God.
2. Until we can create a universe and run it better than God does this one, we have no right to say he is doing a poor job with this one.
3. God doesn't answer to us! He does sometimes give us answers, but he does not answer to us. He is not a genie and we are not his masters.
4. Suffering can be a test of our faith.
5. Suffering in this age is not evidence of God's disapproval; good fortune in this age is not evidence of God's approval.