

Analysis of Job

General

What may be one of the greatest revelations of the Lord Himself, comes at the expense of unexplained hurt. Job helps suffering Christ-followers to focus on the person of God instead of reaching for an answer to why.

Authorship

“The name of the author of Job is lost forever. Rarely has history left such a literary genius unnamed and unknown as to his circumstances or motive for composing such a magnificent work”¹ Dillard and Longman comment that Job is an anonymous work since there is no statement to authorship. Where God is silent, it may be best to not try to fill the voids.

Date

Since it may be impossible to credit the author of the book of Job, it is equally impossible to speculate a date of composition. Though the date of the events of the book is early, this is not necessarily a sign that its composition was early. Dillard and Longman conclude it is best to leave the date of composition open.²

Original Audience

With the author and date in question, the original audience is then difficult to firmly confirm.

Key Interpretive Issues

Key issues in Job are: 1) to recognize the prose and poetic sections of the book, 2) to identify the several speakers and the cycle of their dialogues, 3) to recognize various poetic features and the difficult Hebrew (i.e. chapter 28), 4) to answer the question: “why does man worship God?” 5) to understand the retribution theology of the time of Job, 6) to recognize the work and person of the adversary, Satan, 7) to appreciate God’s power and wisdom to order the entire universe.

¹ Lasor, et. al. 473

² Longman and Dillard, 200.

Summary/Purpose Statement

The book of Job speaks of a challenge set in heaven between God and Satan. The wager focuses on Satan's claim: "Will Job serve God for nothing?" After Satan takes away Job's children, his wealth and his health, three friends struggle to comfort him by alternately illuminating that he is a sinner who needs to repent. Job stands in opposition to each of their opinions with his blamelessness and in the process he wants to meet with God to give a justification of his doings in his life. Finally God responds to Job but the answer(s) is not what Job anticipated. God simply gave Job a two-part science quiz that demonstrated that God could be trusted to order man's life. The purpose of this book is to offer those who suffer an opportunity to choose to see God as inferior (i.e. questioning, blaming and/or complaining about God) or to elevate the sufferer's faith and trust in God even when it is hard or impossible to hear from God and the hurt is so profound and difficult.³

Outline of Job⁴

- I. The introduction of the main players and the divine challenge (1:1-2:13).
 - A. Job is introduced as the greatest of all the men of the east (1:1-5).
 - B. God, Satan and the challenge are introduced (1:6-2:10).
 - C. Job's three friends are introduced in the midst of Job's suffering (2:11-13).
- II. Job laments the day of his birth (3:1-26).
 - A. Let the day expire in which I was born (3:1-10).
 - B. Why did I not die on that day? (3:11-19).
 - C. Why does the sufferer have life at all if he is meant to suffer? (3:20-26).
- III. Job's three friends answer Job's lament and Job answers them (4:1-27:23).
 - A. **First cycle:** Eliphaz: experience has shown me that the innocent do not suffer (4:1-5:27).
 - B. Job's answer and complaint: show me my sin! What have I done to God? (6:1-7:21).
 - C. Bildad: tradition has shown me that you should seek God (8:1-22).
 - D. Job's answer and complaint: God punishes me without cause (9:10:22).

³ "It is easier to lower your view of God than to raise your faith to such a height." Francis Andersen, *Job: Tyndale OT Commentary Series*, (London: IVP, 1976), p. 94.

⁴ I'm very grateful for and indebted to Dr. Mark McGinniss for his help and insights. This over-all view of the outline comes from his notes from Baptist Bible Seminary Class - OT500: Introduction to the Old Testament and Old Testament Literature.

- E. Zophar: theology has shown me that God is only dealing with part of your sin (11:1-20).
 - F. Job's answer and complaint: I want God to answer my charges (12:1-14:22).
 - G. **Second cycle:** Eliphaz: experience has shown me that the wicked suffer (15:1-35).
 - H. Job's answer and complaint: God is my opponent (16:1-17:16).
 - I. Bildad: the wicked suffer (18:1-21).
 - J. Job's answer and complaint: God has wronged me (19:1-29).
 - K. Zophar: tradition has shown me that wicked only triumphant for a short time then they suffer (20:1-29).
 - L. Job's answer and complaint: I see the wicked prospering (21:1-34).
 - M. **Third cycle:** Eliphaz: Job, you are wicked (22:1-30)!
 - N. Job's answer and complaint: I am innocent (23:1-24:25).
 - O. Bildad: Man cannot be just before God (25:1-6).
 - P. Job's answer and complaint: You are not right. I know God and I know my life (26:1-31:40). Job seeks, who can have wisdom (28:1-28)? Job then defends himself (29:1-31:41).
- IV. Young Elihu's response: you are all wrong (32:1-37:24).
- A. Elihu's anger against Job's friends for declaring him guilty without evidence (32:1-22).
 - B. Elihu's anger against Job for declaring himself justified before God (33:1-37:24).
- V. God's divine science quiz to Job and Job's responses (38:1-42:6).
- A. God speaks to Job, do you know how I (God) order the universe and can you do it? (38:1-39:30).
 - B. Job responds: God, I know I am small and will keep silent (40:1-5).
 - C. God answers Job with a challenge, you can't humble these two mighty animals. How can you hope to deal with the wicked on earth? (40:6-41:34).
 - D. Job repents of his charges against God (42:1-6).
- VI. God restores Job two-fold (42:7-17).
- A. Three friends restored (42:7-9).
 - B. Job's family and wealth are restored two-fold (42:10-17).

Theological Issues

One of the greatest struggles through Job is the issue of why good people suffer. Another issue is how one deals with their perspective on wisdom and view of God and Job. Some see God as a big bully, moving His pawns (people) where He wants. Although man may think he or she needs answers to the “why’s” of their suffering to ease their pain, in reality all they need is a fresh glimpse of God in His power, and His wisdom to order the sufferer’s life according to His purpose (ch. 38-40).

Theological Application

Human suffering will continue until Satan is bound and thrown into the pit of Hades forever. When one struggles through the challenges of life, the question of why can easily flow from our lips as our heart searches for answers. God is supreme and is forever sovereign in His ruling. Not all suffering can be explained by personal sin. This wisdom is later reinforced in John 9 when Jesus heals the man born blind. His disciples question Him, “...who sinned, this man or his parents...?” The greatest opportunity we have in suffering is to give God the glory He so rightfully deserves, even though we may not understand why it may be happening to us.