

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF JOB

Dr. Ian A. Fair

2026



Content

Bibliograph.....	3
Scholarly Introduction to the book	4
Introduction to the History and Person of Job.....	5
The Structure and Lessons of Job.....	8
The Theology of Job.....	13
General Lessons from Job	15

Bibliograph

- Alden, Robert, *Job: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, The New American Commentary, Hollman, 1994.
- Bingham, Craig, *Ashes and a Thunderstorm: A New Reading of the Book of Job*, Araphel Publishing, 2022.
- Clines, David, J. A., *et al*, *Job*, 4 volumes, Word Biblical Commentary, Zondervan, 2015-2017.
- Habel, Norman C., *Book of Job*, John Knox Westminster, 1985.
- Hartley, John E., *The Book of Job*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament, Eerdmans, 1988.
- Longman III, Tremper, *1 Chronicles–Job*, Zondervan, 2010.
- Longman III, Tremper, *Job*, Baker Academic, 2016.
- Strauss, Matthew C., *The Book of Job: God and Human Suffering*, 2022.

Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible
Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary
Tyndale Bible Dictionary

Scholarly Introduction to the book

Scholars from all dimensions of academic and religious affiliation, including teachers and ministers with some biblical and theological training, have through the Christian ages confessed frustration over the enigmatic nature of the Book of Job. There are many irregularities, literary and historical, in the text that reasonable literary approaches, other than a dogged dictation theory, have expressed some confusion when attempting to resolve some of the intricacies of Job!

The Authority of Scripture

As expressed elsewhere, my Web Pages, *Biblical-Research*, I hold to a high standard regarding the *Inspiration, Authority, and Normative* role of the Bible as *Sacred Scripture*. I perceive Scripture to have been produced under the *guidance of the Holy Spirit, as holy men of God recorded God's Word for others*, 2 Tim 3:14-17, 1 Pet 2:20.

Our problem is that we fail to understanding *the means* of communication God has used through the centuries; *oral prophetic and priestly communication of traditions, engraved stelas and monuments, clay tablets, direct letters, cultural mysticism, and instruction in various literary forms*. When researching Job we encounter numerous indications of such assortments as vehicles of communication. The preacher ND author of Hebrews indicates such, Heb 1:1, 2, “***In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets;*** ² *but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.*”

The numerous Encyclopedia, Bible Dictionaries, Archaeological Journals, and quality research works bear testimony to the challenges of attempting to reduce Job to a common standard. A closing comment in the Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible expresses the high value scholars have placed on the dimensions of research involved in Job studies. “*With regard to the problem of authorship, it seems best to acknowledge that the author is anonymous. His theology is certainly Yahwistic; thus, he was probably a Hebrew. His literary skills were remarkable, for he has produced one of the finest works known through the ages.*”¹

Job's Literary Style

Whoever Job was, he balances a distinct poetical and prose style of writing, blending in his communication a vast assortment of expressions from a wide range of cultures. He develops a skilled understanding of man's psychological nature, a high view of and faith in the divine, and a skilled theological style of addressing a wide array of human dilemmas and traumas!

The book of Job is not a historical novel, nor a *twelve step* resolution to human struggles and anxiety! Job expresses a marvellous theological understanding of common human-life problems. The ranges of human experiences are all their, family struggles, financial catastrophes, interpersonal struggles, spiritual and religious dilemmas, and spiritual relations of righteousness with God.

The wide range of literary styles, vocabulary, cultural images, etc., lead to a wide range of authorial dates covering several centuries which introduce the possibility that Job was originally written by a *Holy Spirit inspired teacher or prophet*, and then *enriched* through the centuries by family religious or culturally, *Holy Spirit inspired prophets and leaders!*

The Book of Job is a marvellous, wholesome, timeless, intergenerational, theological global ethnic foundation to personal peace and righteousness!

¹ Elwell & Beitzel, “The Book of Job,” *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 2, p. 1169.

Introduction to the History and Person of Job

Resources for the Study of Job

In our study of Job I have drawn of the numerous excellent articles on Job from the best theological and literary encyclopedia, dictionaries, commentaries, and articles on Job. The following reflect material and citations drawn from such resources.

The Person Job

The Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible on Job

“Job, the Author. The question of the authorship of the Book of Job is a difficult one. The difficulty is compounded not only by the lack of ascription of authorship to any individual but also by the structure of the book which, according to some scholars, is a composite consisting of several literary works.

Some scholars who hold that the book is a composite work base their views on alleged incongruities existing among the various sections. The prologue (chs 1; 2) and the epilogue (42:7–17), for example, are seen as separate from the body of the book because they seem to present Job as a man of perfect moral character. The dialogues, however, picture a somewhat more human Job whose utterances about God are at times brash and shocking.

It is true that Job is depicted as a man of perfect moral character in the prologue. But it should be noted that while he refuses his wife’s suggestion to curse God, an account recorded in the prologue (2:9, 10), he does not curse God in the dialogues either. The very point of the book seems to be that even one of the highest moral character can struggle with the ways of God in this world. Only after the series of misfortunes recorded in chapters 1 and 2, and the period of inner struggle that no doubt transpired during the seven days and seven nights before he began to speak (2:11–13), did Job find those deep inner questions that the book deals with. Job’s high moral character is quite evident in the dialogues, for throughout, even though he cannot comprehend God, he speaks the truth before him.

Other portions alleged to be additions to the book are the speeches of Elihu (32–37), the discourse of God (38–41), and the Wisdom poem in chapter 28. It is held by some that the author of the final version borrowed these existing works to provide a literary structure for his own work.

The main structure of the book, consisting of prologue, dialogues, and epilogue, need not necessarily be regarded as the result of a complex process of editing. The Code of Hammurabi, for example, has a similar structure, as does an ancient Egyptian work called “A Dispute Over Suicide.”

With regard to the problem of authorship, it seems best to acknowledge that the author is anonymous. His theology is certainly Yahwistic; thus, he was probably a Hebrew. *His literary skills were remarkable, for he has produced one of the finest works known through the ages.*²

The best information we can gather from scholarly resources and commentaries on Job, the person, was that he was most likely a highly respected person from possibly a pre-patriarchal age, Genesis 1-5.

² Elwell & Beitzel, “The Book of Job,” *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 2, p. 1169.

The Job of History

The Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible on Job reads:

“The Date and History of Job. Since the authorship of the book is in question, *the date of the book is as well.* Some modern scholars place the book in the *postexilic period*, around the 5th century BCE. However, others place it toward the end of the exile. Others put it in the Solomonic era, while others place it much earlier in the period of the patriarchs, Gen 5-11.

The internal evidence points to a very early setting for the book. There are no levitical institutions cited. Job sacrifices for his family as in the period before the priesthood (1:5). The wealth of Job, given in terms of cattle, seems to reflect the patriarchal milieu (1:3).

The language of the book may also point to an early date. Certain linguistic elements indicate more archaic forms of Hebrew, as preserved in the epic material from Ugarit.

It may be that Job himself lived in the 2nd millennium BC. If the book, or part of it, was written then, *it may represent the first written material to find its way into the biblical canon.* The book may have come into its final form in the Solomonic era, when so much of the Hebrew Wisdom Literature was produced.”³

Job, the Book

The Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible on Job reads:

“Jewish Religious Literary Background. The Book of Job belongs to the body of OT materials known as the *Wisdom Literature (Ketuvim)*. This literature deals with the basic issues of human life. The Israelites were not the only ancient people to produce Wisdom Literature. This type of material came out of pagan cultures as well, and often represents efforts to explain the course of human events within the structure of pagan religion.

Several ancient works similar to the OT Book of Job are known from ancient cultures. A Sumerian “Job” exists which does not compare with the biblical book, either in literary scope or depth of feeling. It depicts the plight of a young man whose sorrow was turned to joy as a result of extended pleading to his personal deity. According to Sumerian thought, the gods were responsible for evil as well as good. Only placation of some kind could prevent the evil they might do. There is no attempt to philosophize or expound the problem of the presence of evil in the world.

A Babylonian “Job” also exists. This work, commonly titled “I Will Praise the Lord of Wisdom,” is philosophically similar to the Sumerian, “Job.” In this work the writer describes his suffering in vivid terminology. No one can help him. He wonders whether the ritual obligations of his pagan religion really are pleasing to a god. An emissary of the god Marduk appears to him in a dream and relieves his suffering. The work ends with a section of praise to Marduk in which occurs the affirmation that the offerings he gave the gods served to gladden the hearts of the gods.

Another work, “A Dialogue About Human Misery,” is also similar to the biblical Book of Job. It struggles with the fact that worship of the deities seems to make no difference in the quality of one’s life. A figure in this book reminds the sufferer that the ways of the gods are difficult to understand, and man is naturally perverse. The sufferer appeals to the gods, but the work ends at that point with no resolution to the problem.

These literary works are not comparable to the OT Book of Job theologically or philosophically. They offer only a fatalistic outlook on life and understand life to be governed by the capricious will of the gods.

³ Elwell, & Beitzel, “The Book of Job,” *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 2, p. 1169.

However, these documents, which date variously between the 2nd and 1st millennia BC, may provide us with the literary ground from which the Book of Job sprang. That is, the Book of Job may present the inspired answer to the deep questions that were being considered at this time in history. Thus, *this type of literature may argue for an early date for the Book of Job.*⁴

Job in the Jewish Old Testament -*Tanakh*

Torah (Pentateuch) – ***Nevi'im*** (Prophets) – ***Ketuvim*** - Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, et al, Wisdom Literature

How to Read Job as *Ketuvim* as Wisdom Literature

The ***Ketuvim*** – The “poetic” Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament was considered *Sacred Literature, God’s Word, deeply religious*, by ancient Israel, as it is today by modern Judaism, and Christianity, and has been through the centuries. In fact, Jesus (John 10:34, 15:25), Paul (Rom 3:9-20), and the other Apostolic writers referred to the Psalms and the *Ketuvim* as the *Law, the Word of God, the Sacred writings, and Scripture* (2 Tim 3:14-16).

The hermeneutic approach in the *Wisdom Literature*, Psalms, Proverbs, Job and others is to *determine the theological principle* being presented and find ways or places where those theological principles can apply in one’s own life.

So, in connection with Job, one listens to the advice, evaluates it in the light of God’s advice, and maintain one’s faith in God throughout the vicissitudes of life!

By maintaining faith with God and Jesus through seeking the wisdom of *Ketuvim* one does not *gain a righteous relationship with God, such as salvation by God!* One maintains a righteous relationship with God.

Note Paul on this topic, ***the law and the prophets, Rom 3:19-26:***

“¹⁹ Now we know that ***whatever the law says*** it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. ²⁰ For no human being will be justified in his sight by works of the law, ***since through the law comes knowledge of sin.***

²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law, ***although the law and the prophets bear witness to it,*** ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction; ²³ since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins; ²⁶ it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies him who has faith in Jesus.”

⁴ Elwell, & Beitzel, “The Book of Job,” *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 2, pp. 1169–1170.

The Structure and Lessons of Job⁵

“The Prologue. 1:1–2:13

This section of the book describes the events which led to the suffering of Job. He is pictured at the outset as a man of wealth with a family for whom he cared deeply.

In a dramatic scene set in heaven Satan appears, and is asked by the Lord, “Have you considered my servant Job, ... a blameless and upright man?” (1:8). Satan’s reply is, “Put forth thy hand now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse thee to thy face” (1:11).

There follows the first of Job’s great calamities, the loss of his family and his possessions.

Another encounter between the Lord and Satan leads to the physical suffering of Job.

*It is this loathsome disease that provides the context for the dialogues which follow. In all of this the writer is careful to tell us that **Job did not sin**. He has resisted his wife’s plea to curse God. He has resisted the temptation to forsake God because of the loss of his children. But suddenly the placid picture ends with dialogues as we **listen to Job’s complaints**. We wonder, has Job given up his faith in God?*

Three of Job’s friends have come to comfort him. They sit silent in his presence for seven days, reluctant to speak. After the period of silence they begin their dialogues with Job.

The Dialogues. 3:1–31:40

The First Cycle (3:1–14:22).

*Job’s complaint, recorded in chapter 1, questions the wisdom of God **in allowing him to be born**. He wonders why life was given to one whose lot in life is to suffer.*

*Eliphaz is the first of Job’s friends to speak. A polite man on the surface, **he is heartless underneath**. His answer is that **Job must have sinned**; why else would he be suffering so (4:7–11)?*

*Eliphaz clearly **believes that Job’s questioning represents a negative attitude toward God**. He appeals to Job to return to the Lord (4:8) and give up his vexation toward God, since his anger will lead only to ruin (5:2). He sees a positive element in suffering, for he affirms that it is chastening from the Almighty (5:17).*

*Job responds by pointing out that his vexation is warranted in view of the terrible suffering he is enduring (6:1–7). **He also complains that Eliphaz is in the wrong in not showing him kindness**, likening him to a wadi in the desert which offers no water in the hot, dry season (6:14–23).*

*The next comforter, **Bildad**, is even more heartless than Eliphaz. **He too repeats the accusation that Job has sinned**. His pitiless attitude is evident in his reference to Job’s children, blaming their deaths on probable sin in their lives (8:3).*

*Bildad, like Eliphaz, appeals to Job to turn to God (8:5), assuring him that God will surely respond (8:6). **He pictures Job’s misfortunes as the result of turning from God** (8:11–19) but assures him that God will not reject a blameless man (8:20).*

*Job’s response to Bildad begins with a poignant question: “Truly I know that it is so: **But how can a man be just before God?**” (9:2). This question is followed by an **eloquent statement***

⁵ Elwell, & Beitzel, “The Book of Job,” In *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 2, pp. 1170–1172.

*in which Job pictures the magnitude of God's power as seen in the universe (9:3–12). Job stands before the might of God completely helpless to withstand that power. **He protests that he cannot contend with such a God**, or protest his innocence before him, for he is too powerful to oppose.*

*Job also complains that he cannot gain a fair hearing from God because God believes him guilty. The fact that God has punished him with his affliction proves that he does not regard him as innocent (9:14–24). Job continues his response through chapter 10 and **questions God's wisdom in bringing him into existence** (10:18–22).*

*The next to speak is **Zophar**. **He too accuses Job of sin** (11:4–6). In an insulting statement he says that God “knows worthless men; when he sees iniquity, will he not consider it? But a stupid man will get understanding, when a wild ass's colt is born a man” (11:11, 12).*

***Job's anger is kindled by Zophar's insulting accusations** (12:2, 3), and he calls on God to withdraw his hand and answer his demand that God speak (13:20–28).*

The Second Cycle (15:1–21:34).

*The second cycle of discourses continues in the same pattern as the first. **Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar** continue their accusations, **attributing Job's misfortune to sin in his life**. But as the narrative continues, **the speakers begin to become more involved in their own assertions**, and they no longer answer each other's arguments as directly as they did in the first series of dialogues.*

The Third Cycle (22:1–31:40).

*In the third series of dialogues only **Eliphaz and Bildad** speak. **The accusations of sin in Job become even more pointed and cruel**. **Eliphaz** says, “**Is not your wickedness great? There is no end to your iniquities**” (22:5). And **Bildad** proclaims, “**The stars are not clean in his sight; how much less man, who is a maggot**” (25:5, 6).*

*This third dialogue is unusual in that **Job speaks more than he does in the others**. While **Bildad's argument extends for only six verses**, **Job's reply goes on for six chapters** (26–31).*

***Chapter 31 is an important one**. In it **Job protests his innocence**. It is a chapter in which **Job's sincerity cannot be doubted**. He affirms that he has been morally pure (1–4), he has not been deceitful (5–8), he has not been guilty of adultery (9–12), he has concern for others (13–23), he has not trusted in wealth (24–28). **He concludes with a general affirmation of his innocence** (29–40).*

*A pattern begins to develop. **Job gradually moves away from his friends in the discussion**. They become more insistent on sin as the cause of his misfortunes, and **Job more firmly asserts his innocence**. The writer of the book deftly weaves the account so that the reader can find little that is unorthodox in the statements of the friends. Yet while we may agree with their words, we cannot approve their attitudes. **It is true that sin brings punishment, but the friends emphasize only that**.*

***The next friend, Elihu**, will point out **another function of suffering**.*

*We hear the ring of truth in Job's protestations of innocence. But if we believe Job and also believe the comforters, **we have the same dilemma as Job**.*

***We do not know where the truth lies**. We do not know why Job is suffering. **The Speech of Elihu** (32–37).*

*Elihu is a young man who listens to his fellow comforters with growing impatience (32:3). He is overly sensitive about his youth (32:6–22), but **when he speaks he reveals an understanding of suffering that is more mature than that of his companions.***

Elihu emphasizes the fact that suffering is chastening (33:19) which reveals the goodness of God (33:29–33).** While this thought was found in Eliphaz' first speech (5:17), it is given greater prominence by Elihu, who emphasizes a dimension of suffering that reveals the love of God. But still one feels that the whole answer has not been given. **Another dimension follows in the words of God.

The Voice from the Whirlwind (38–41).

***God speaks in this section.** He poses one question after another to Job, all having to do with some aspect of the creation. God asks, “**Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? ... Who determined its measurements?**” Then, in a note of sarcasm, he adds, “Surely you know!” (38:4, 5).*

God refers to the seas and asks Job who made the ocean basins (38:8–11).** He pictures the rising dawn and asks Job if he has “commanded the morning” (38:12). Further questions relate to light (38:19–21), snow (38:22–24), rain (38:25–30), the constellations (38:31–33), storms (38:34–38), and animals (38:39–39:30). **Job is made to realize the vastness of God's power as revealed in the creation. Job must have felt rather small and insignificant as he contemplated God's might.

*But the questions are meant to accomplish more than to make Job feel small. **They are meant to make him feel ashamed of his presumption as well. The sarcasm in this section is particularly biting, and one can imagine Job sinking deeper into the ash heap with each question.** In the section dealing with light (38:19–21), the question “Where is the way to the dwelling of light?” is followed by “You know, for you were born then, and the number of your days is great!” And in the section dealing with the constellations God asks Job, “Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades, or loose the cords of Orion?” (38:31).*

*Job has been somewhat brash in his statements to God in the dialogues. **He has demanded that God speak to him (13:22), and has accused God of injustice (19:6, 7; 24:1; 27:2).** Now, as he is reminded of the power of the Almighty, **Job begins to recognize his proper place in the universe.***

***The crucial questions in this long series are those in 40:15–41:34.** Here, in an unusual sequence, God draws Job's attention to **Behemoth (40:15) and Leviathan (41:1).** While some scholars see these as mythical figures, it is most probable that these, like the others cited throughout this section, are **literary depictions of ordinary animals known for their great size and strength.** It is suggested by many scholars that Behemoth is the hippopotamus and Leviathan the crocodile. The contexts in which these animals are described seem to support this.*

God commands Job, “Behold, Behemoth,” (40:15) and at the end of the section asks, “Can one take him with hooks, or pierce his nose with a snare?” After reading the description of Behemoth's power in this section, one has to answer the question negatively.

Leviathan, or the crocodile, is cited next. Again the strength of this animal is set forth. God asks, “Can you fill his skin with harpoons?” (41:7). He describes Leviathan as thrashing in the water (41:25), defying all efforts to capture him (41:26).

These references to two powerful beasts end the section in which the voice of God speaks from the whirlwind.** It is a section filled with suspense. **At the end of it, the reader finds that Job has learned his lesson (42:1, 2).

There is an important reason for these questions that came to Job with such insistent force.

Job has been led to see that he does not control the universe—God does.

Job is forced to face the power of God and learn that he is only part of this vast structure that reflects God’s almighty power.

By demanding that God speak to him, Job was attempting to control God.

By implying that God was unjust he was making a judgment on God, thus making himself equal, if not superior to God. God demands that Job face the power displayed in the universe and repeat his petulant words.

*Job wanted a God he could control; God demands submission. **Job wanted a world run his way**; God created a world to be run his way. Job had manufactured an illusory god, one who should obey his own whims.*

By recognizing God’s sovereign control in this world, he is led to see that suffering has a purpose. Job may not recognize that purpose, but it is part of the creation of the Almighty. It is no wonder that Job begins to enter into a settled peace and acknowledge God’s sovereignty (42:1–6).

This section of questions is followed by a poignant response from Job. He confesses God’s might (42:2). He admits that he did not fully understand things too wonderful for him (42:3), and he repents in dust and ashes (42:6).

The Epilogue. 42:7–17

The final part of the book begins with a denunciation of Job’s comforters. They are condemned because they did not speak that which was right (42:7). This seems most unusual, since their words have seemed quite orthodox. Yet, in the final analysis, they did not say what was right because their answer to the problem of suffering was only a partial answer; and because it was partial, it was dangerous. It caricatured God as an austere being who used suffering only to punish sin. It did not allow room for the loving hand of God in suffering, as did Elihu’s answer to the problem.

While Job said some things about God that were harsh, he was not berated. In fact, the text says that Job spoke of God that which was right (42:8). This evidently refers to Job’s concluding words in 42:1–6 where, purified by suffering, he humbly yielded himself to God’s sovereign will.”⁶

Job 42:1-6 ¹ *Then Job answered the LORD:*

² *“I know that thou canst do all things,
and that no purpose of thine can be thwarted.*

³ *‘Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?’
Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand,
things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.*

⁴ *‘Hear, and I will speak;
I will question you, and you declare to me.’*

⁵ *I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear,
but now my eye sees thee;*

⁶ *therefore I despise myself,
and repent in dust and ashes.”*

⁶ Elwell, & Beitzel, “The Book of Job,” In *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 2, pp. 1170–1172.

⁷ *After the LORD had spoken these words to Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite:
“My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends; for you have not
spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.”*

The Theology of Job

Elwell & Beitzel, “The Book of Job,” *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*

“**Purpose and Theological Teaching.** The question of the *central purpose of the Book of Job* has been a serious one in biblical scholarship for ages. It is difficult to assert that the purpose of the book is to present the solution to the problem of evil, for at the very point where an answer is expected, God asks questions instead of giving a reasoned answer.

Some have suggested that the central purpose is to answer the question, “Why do the righteous suffer?” It is true that the book has much to do with this question, but it too presents various problems. When one comes to the end of the book, he has only the words of the comforters and the statements of Elihu relating to that question—not a great deal at all. Then one may wonder why we were given the long dialogues with their record of Job’s internal struggles. When God speaks from the whirlwind, we find no concern to explain why the righteous suffer. *Job is simply led to accept his place in the universe.*

It seems best to adopt another approach to the book. In attempting to find the central theme of any literary work, one should look to the prologue and the epilogue. In the prologue he will see what the author intends to do, and in the epilogue he will find the author’s understanding of what he actually has done.

In the prologue of Job, the author deftly establishes an atmosphere of suspense. *We are told of Job’s perfect moral character.* Then Satan taunts, “Put forth thy hand now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse thee to thy face.” We wonder whether Job will curse God and thus deny his faith, *but then we hear his great affirmation of trust: “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”*

The writer then sets up another suspenseful situation when Satan proposes to afflict Job. To this trial is added the discouraging words of *Job’s wife: “Curse God and die.” Again we wonder whether this trial will destroy Job’s faith. The suspense is broken when we read that “in all this Job did not sin with his lips.”*

The writer then introduces Job’s friends into the narrative. We are told that they remained silent for seven days. We wonder what is going on in Job’s mind. Is he still the man of staunch faith, or is his trust being eroded as the disease eats at his flesh? When Job speaks and curses the day of his birth, the suspense becomes intense. *The writer has raised a question in our minds: Will Job’s faith remain secure?*

At times we think it will. Job makes several great affirmations of faith. He states that God will vindicate him. *One of the greatest affirmations of the book occurs in 19:25: “For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at last he will stand upon the earth; and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then from my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see on my side, and my eyes shall behold, and not another.”*

At other times Job expresses deep doubts about God’s orderly control of the universe. The suspense continues.

Throughout the dialogues we trace the pattern of Job’s struggle. It is a deep emotional struggle in which Job speaks from the depth of despair and the heights of triumphant faith.

In the epilogue the suspense is resolved. Job’s trials have not destroyed or even eroded his faith. He emerges triumphant, with a humble faith. He can say, “I know that thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of thine can be thwarted.”

The purpose of the writer is clear. At the outset he has raised the question, “Will Job’s faith endure in spite of trial?” The dialogues have heightened the suspense, and the epilogue resolves it. Job has remained faithful to God in the midst of his suffering. We learn that Job’s faith is genuine.”

The Book of Job is a treatise on faith and the role that suffering plays in faith.

“As such, it fits into a distinctive body of biblical material that relates these two concepts. This important teaching may be found, for example, in the prophecy of Habakkuk. The prophet complains about the injustice he sees all around him (1:1–4). He balks at God’s response that he will use the Assyrians to punish the evil that the prophet decries (1:12–17). *Then in this context of suffering and injustice God speaks: “For still the vision awaits its time. . . . If it seem slow, wait for it. . . . Behold, he whose soul is not upright in him shall fail, but the righteous shall live by his faith”* (2:3, 4).

The word translated “faith” here connotes in the Hebrew the enduring nature of faith and is best translated “faithfulness.” The passage teaches that the truly righteous person will remain faithful to God in spite of the seeming delay of God’s justice. He may not be able to comprehend all that God does in history, but his faith in God’s good plan and wise providence will remain secure. *This aspect of faith is one facet of the total spectrum of faith in the Bible.* It does not allow for works but is solely dependent on God.

The same relationship between faith and suffering may be found in the NT as well. In James 1:12 trials and faithfulness are woven together in the words, “*Blessed is the man who endures trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life which God has promised to those who love him*” (see also 1 Pt 1:3–7).

According to these passages *trials provide the test of faith, and thus reveal whether one’s faith is true or false.* Faith that is not true will not stand the test of suffering (Mt 13:20, 21). ***The Book of Job then, is a tapestry of faith. It connects faith and trials, and portrays the nature of a genuine faith, a faith unbroken by suffering.***

There are other principles in this rich book. It teaches that *sin brings punishment.* There is truth in the words of the comforters that is corroborated by Scripture. But this is but a small part of the role of suffering in life. *The book also teaches that suffering has a didactic function, for it is chastening from the Almighty.* In the section in which God speaks from the whirlwind, we learn that suffering is part of the structure of things and that we must submit to the wisdom of the Creator. In this section God reveals himself personally. Job could say, “Now my eye sees thee” (42:5). *In trial we need a God who is near much more than a philosophical treatise on the problem of evil.* Another emphasis is the role of suffering in *producing true righteousness.* While Job was depicted as a righteous man at the beginning of the book, *his righteousness lacked what suffering could give it.*

At the end of the book, Job is a humbler man, who sees his role in the universe and who has submitted to the wisdom of God.”⁷

⁷ Elwell & Beitzel, “The Book of Job,” *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 2, pp. 1172–1173.

General Lessons from Job

- ✓ The real meaning of *faith - trusting* God.
- ✓ The value of *true relationships*.
- ✓ God's *sovereign knowledge and wisdom*.
- ✓ *Bad things happen to good people*, because of *Satan* and *life in general*.
- ✓ *Life includes disobedience, sin, suffering, personal responsibility, faith, forgiveness, God's presence, God's assurance*.
- ✓ *Suffering* is the *maturing ground of faith and trust in God*.
- ✓ Friends may fail us, but in the midst of suffering *God never fails us*, He is always there!
- ✓ *Wisdom* comes from *respecting God's wisdom*, not friends.
- ✓ *God is always with us*, even in the presence of storms.
- ✓ *God is ultimately in control!*
- ✓ *Real faith* is more than knowing about God. *Real faith is trusting in God, his wisdom, plan, purpose, and power*.