

## BOOK OF JOB

1. The book of Esther is the last of the Historical books in the Bible.
2. The book of Job is the first of the Poetic books. There are **5** such books, namely, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon.
3. Job is the greatest piece of literature but it should not be analysed line by line but is best listened to instead.
4. Job may be the first book written in the Bible, probably around the time of Abraham.
5. The theme of Job is “Why do good people suffer?” This issue has troubled men -especially about why innocent people have to suffer.
6. This book is a long book and is placed in the centre of the Bible because it occupies the mind of many people as there are lots of sufferings in the world. It has a total of **42** chapters because suffering is such a huge problem.
7. The book is also baffling to read because it goes round and round. This is because the answer to the question of why people have to suffer is complex and not a simple black and white issue. Hence, the book is “purposely” complicated.

### Who is Job?

1. Job was not an Israelite. He lived in the land of Uz (may be in the Middle East area).
2. Job believed in one God (like the Israelites).
3. He also believed that God is good unlike other religions and he believed that God is an all-powerful God. The question is that, since God is good and powerful, why does He allow suffering? People will think that if God is bad, then He will let men suffer because He does not care, or if He is weak, then He cannot help men who suffer.
4. The book of Job explores the theme of why a good and powerful God allows sufferings to happen.
5. Job was blameless, upright and blessed by God, yet he suffered more than anyone else. Job was a supreme example of why good people had to suffer.

### The Background of the Book of Job

1. This book was written before the New Testament and before the Good News was proclaimed. We know, from the New Testament, that sufferings of this world are nothing compared to heaven’s blessings. But the people in the Old Testament, such as Abraham and Job, as well as unbelievers today, who have no idea of heaven and do not know a sure way of getting there, will find it unfair for good people to suffer on Earth.
2. Christians know about life after death and that God will settle the account at His judgement seat. Unbelievers do not know about this at all.
3. In the olden days, Israelites believed that after death, they would all go to a place called Sheol (which was a waiting place for the dead); but they had no idea where they would go after that.

### The Structure of the Book of Job

1. Job starts with a short prologue in Chapters 1 and 2. These two chapters are not written in poetic form.
2. Then a long dialogue follows, which is written in a poetic form.
3. Then comes the section of a monologue.
4. And then a conclusion.

### The Prologue (Chapters 1 and 2)

1. Job 1:1-5. It starts with a scene on Earth, with a good man called Job.
2. Job 1:6-7. Then a scene in heaven, with angels reporting to God about the happenings on Earth.
3. Job 1:6-7. A fallen angel, Satan, reported to God on the bad things about the people and their sins. This is because his name Satan means "Accuser" and he is like a prosecutor in court, always accusing the brethren even to this day. See Revelation 12:10.
4. Job 1:8-12. God then asked Satan about Job. Satan claimed that Job was a good man only because God blessed him so much. God then challenged Satan and allowed him to take away everything that Job had, except that Satan was not allowed to take away his life.
5. Job 1:13-22. Despite Satan taking everything away except his life, Job blessed God and said that he came into the world with nothing and so he would also leave the world with nothing (in verses 21 and 22).
6. Job 2:1-10. Satan then challenged God again about Job's righteousness and God allowed Satan to touch his body and flesh to see if Job would curse God BUT God did not allow Satan to take away Job's life. Hence, Job had boils from head to toe and became smelly and ugly. This was a terrible suffering which impacted him both physically and socially. His wife then asked Job to curse God which resulted also in mental suffering to Job. In verse 10, Job responded to his wife that whatever God gives, he would have to accept it, including sufferings.

### The Dialogue (Chapters 3 to 27)

This section is written in poetic form.

1. Job 3:1-26. Job lamented the day he was born. If he was not born, he would not have to suffer. This poses the question of "What is the purpose of life on Earth?"
2. Job Chapters 4 to 27. This dialogue begins with 3 friends of Job trying to comfort him. They explained to him in 3 cycles why he was suffering.
  - a) His eldest friend (Eliphaz) said that Job was suffering because he was a sinner and he asked Job to repent. But Job responded that he was innocent and he had nothing to repent of.
  - b) The 2<sup>nd</sup> friend (Bildad) gave an explanation which was the common understanding amongst most people. He said that good people would be rewarded while bad people would suffer. This, we know, is not always true

although it is generally true. Job responded that he was not that bad to deserve such horrible sufferings.

- c) The 3<sup>rd</sup> friend (Zophar) who was the youngest amongst them started to accuse Job of sins which he did not do. Job protested even more against these nonsensical accusations and Job started to complain against God. Job vented his frustrations and anger, thinking that God was wicked and unfair. This is typical for all of us when we are angry; we tend to say things we do not really mean. It is also the danger that will happen when two opposing groups argue and get angry over discussions.
3. We see Job flipping between despair and hope in his responses to his friends. Job asked God “Where are you?” and then he said, “Thank You” to God. This alternating between despair and hope is common when we are suffering.

### The Monologue (Chapters 28 to 41)

1. Job Chapter 28. This chapter is a poem on wisdom written by Job himself. It is not easy to find wisdom in suffering.
2. Job Chapters 29 to 31. We see Job declaring his innocence, insisting and demanding that God gave him an answer to why he was suffering.
3. Job Chapters 32 to 37. Elihu, who was not one of Job’s 3 friends, gave a monologue as a bystander. He was much younger than Job’s 3 friends and so he waited till no one had anything else to say before he gave this monologue message. What Elihu said was also similar to what most people say. Unlike the ancient wisdom given by the 3 friends of Job that only bad people suffer, Elihu added that maybe God was trying to mould the character of Job.
4. Job Chapters 38 to 41. We see that this last monologue came from God Himself. Finally, God answered Job. Our God is a patient God. He let men talk nonsense and even accuse Him, etc. as if they knew God. For example, they claimed that God will definitely punish the wicked while the wicked were still on Earth. They talked as if they know God.

### God’s Response to Job (Chapters 38 to 41) – The last part of the Monologue

1. This is the most amazing part of the book of Job.
2. God did 2 things for Job:
  - a) Job Chapters 38 to 39. Firstly, God gave Job a virtual world tour.
    - i. He asked Job who feeds the animals, how do birds fly, who made the stars, etc.
    - ii. God is saying that “You think you can tell Me what to do? You think you know a lot about suffering? BUT you do not even understand the everyday happenings in the world!” If we do not even understand the physical things that we can see and touch, how can we possibly understand the moral standards of God or understand how God rules?

- iii. Job repented and realised that he did not understand suffering at all and should not have demanded an answer.
- b) Job Chapters 40 to 41. Secondly, God asked Job to consider the 2 beasts that He had made.
  - i. Job 40:15-24. The first beast was the Behemoth with a tail like the cedar tree. It looks the description of a dinosaur.
  - ii. Job 41:1-34. The second beast was the Leviathan, which seemed to be like a dinosaur that can throw fire from the mouth. It seemed to have some combustible component in its mouth.
  - iii. Job knew that these 2 beasts caused a lot of sufferings on Earth. After the great Flood during Noah's time, there were still dinosaurs and Job lived after the Flood, when animals were no more friends with men.
  - iv. God is effectively saying that He made these animals which caused much sufferings, so what is Job's issue about his own sufferings?
  - v. Job must have seen these beasts before because he did not ask God what these animals were.
  - vi. God is saying that if Job thought he was so smart to want to know about the cause for suffering, he should know that even explanations about how daily things that he could see and touch, would blow his mind. Yet, Job never demanded an explanation for all these physical happenings. So, why was he asking about suffering?
- 3. When Adam sinned, God already said men will suffer and the ground had been cursed in Genesis Chapter 3. Why then, are we asking God why men have to suffer?

### The Conclusion (Chapter 42)

- 1. Job 42:1-6. Job repented about his own big talk.
- 2. God did not give a clear answer for his sufferings.
  - a) There is no clear answer because we do not understand the complexity of the world, why some things happen this way or that way.
  - b) Our simple mind thinks that good people should be rewarded and bad people should suffer but that is not always the case.
  - c) God has His reasons which we do not know. It is like a mosquito asking a human, "Why do you spray insecticide on me?" Mosquitoes do not know and cannot figure out about malaria because they only focus on one thing, "Why are you killing me?" We are like that mosquito, a tiny brain trying to demand an answer from a big and infinite God.

### So why are there sufferings?

- 1. While we cannot fully understand, as Christians we should know this:
  - a) Man sinned and therefore experience sufferings (see Genesis Chapter 3).

- b) Sufferings can hurt us but not harm us.
  - c) Sufferings can transform us, to make us more humble, sympathetic to others and become more prayerful. Romans 8:28-29 say that all things work together for good to those who love God and to those who are called by Him. So, God allows suffering to transform us.
  - d) As Christians, with the benefit of reading the New Testament, we have the advantage of seeing this (unlike people such as Job or current unbelievers).
  - e) All these sufferings are nothing compared to the eternal glory in heaven. See 2 Corinthians 4:16-18.
2. So, Christians have the answer. We should trust God who is our Father and He knows best what is good for us, just as when our earthly fathers take away unhealthy food or force us to do things which we hate, such as, going to the dentist, stopping us from playing computer games, etc.
  3. To the unbelievers, we have to be honest and tell them that we do not have answers for every single suffering but we know that suffering is for eternal glory as Christians.
  4. There are many lessons in Job, e.g. Satan has limited power and cannot hurt us unless God permits it. The main theme of Job is that suffering is real and God has His own reason for each suffering that He permits. The world is more complex and there no one simple answer for many things.
  5. *Job 42:12-17. We also* see that God finally restored Job after he repented and doubled his blessings. He is such a wonderful God and we can trust Him.