



GREAT THEMES OF JOB

A Thirteen Lesson Bible Study by Jeff S. Smith

Introduction

The book of Job is an enthralling examination of the reasons behind the suffering of men and how a group of them try to figure out what caused one particular series of calamities in the life of Job. Through their curiosity and speculation, we begin to learn the right and wrong answers to some of our deepest questions. We also hope to learn to trust God a little more and to loathe the devil a bit more as well. In this series of lessons, we want to study the text of Job with an eye toward understanding better the reason for human suffering, especially so that we might be better prepared when it hits.

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Lesson 1: *Prologue (1:1-5)*

1. How does the writer describe Job (1:1)?

2. How would the knowledge in the following passages have helped Job achieve this kind of character?
 - Psalm 19:7-11:
 - Psalm 119:104:
 - Psalm 119:105:

3. How do you reconcile the approval of Job's God-fearing with what John writes in First John 4:17-19?

4. Who are the members of Job's immediate family? What do we know about them?

5. What are the names of Job's three friends? What does Job think of their consolation (16:2)? What is the name of the young man who speaks later in the book, just before God does?

6. Is it more likely that Job lived in the patriarchal, Mosaic or Christian age?

7. In which category of Bible study does Job belong?

- Books of Law
- Books of history
- Prophecies
- Wisdom Literature

8. Using a concordance, find two other Bible books that mention Job.

9. While the recording of the book of Job is Scripture and is as inspired as any other Bible book, does it follow that the words of the various speeches are inspired as well? What impact will this have on our study of the book?

10. We know about Job spiritually. What kind of man was he in earthly terms?

11. Why did Job offer burnt sacrifices for his children?

12. What means of cursing God are described by the following passages?

- Psalm 14:1:
- Matthew 12:22-32:
- Romans 1:20-21:
- Hebrews 10:26-31:

Lesson 2: *Behind the Curtain (1:6-2:13)*

1. Job 1:6 may either refer to a worship assembly of men that Satan secretly infiltrated or to an assembly of spirit beings at which he was expected. Where had Satan been? How did Peter describe him (1 Peter 5:8)?

2. According to popular mythology, of what realm is Satan the ruler (Revelation 20:10)? According to the Bible, of what realm is the prince (John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11; Ephesians 2:2, 6:12)?

3. What single tactic is key to Satan's success (John 8:44, First Timothy 2:14, Second Corinthians 11:14)?

4. What did Satan think of Job's faith before testing him?

5. Describe the four tragedies that befell Job that day.

6. Does Job curse God to his face as Satan predicted? How does Job respond to his losses?
7. What was Satan's second plan to take away Job's faith? How does he replicate this method even today (Second Corinthians 12:7, First Timothy 5:23)?
8. Mary might have made Jesus feel this way when her brother Lazarus died. What did she (and others) say to the Lord when he arrived (John 11:32-37)? What do many expect of God when it comes to intense human suffering, such as what occurred on Sept. 11, 2001 and during the Holocaust?
9. Which was more valuable to Job—broken pottery or his helpmeet? Explain your answer.
10. Why did Job's three friends travel to his home? What did they do upon arrival?

Lesson 3: *Job's Complaints (3:1-26)*

1. What had Job lost? What did he have left?

2. What did Job curse in verse 1? What did Satan want him to curse?

3. Although life is relatively brief and fleeting, sometimes we feel like Job and just want to get it over with. What kinds of things happen to people, which cause them to wish they hadn't been born?

4. Understanding the brevity of life, what should be our response, especially when suffering comes (Ecclesiastes 12:1,13-14, James 4:13-17, Ephesians 5:15-17, Second Corinthians 6:2)?

5. What four groups of people did Job wish to join?

- 3:14:
- 3:15:
- 3:16:
- 3:17:

6. Where would he be joining these people?

7. What does Job mean when he suggests that he feels “hedged in” by God (verse 23)?

8. In the last two verses of chapter three, Job finally articulates the real problem. What is it? Explain what he means.

9. How would you feel if you lost even one of the things that Job lost, let alone all of them—your wealth, your family or your health? How do First Corinthians 10:12 and Galatians 6:1-5 warn us about looking down on people who are sinking in sorrow?

10. Even those who are blameless, upright, God-fearing and evil-shunning sometimes harbor a secret dread of losing some of the blessings that make life more enjoyable. What keeps us from allowing that anticipatory dread to become debilitating worry (Matthew 6:22-34, Philippians 4:10-12, James 1:16-17)?

11. How did the apostle Paul turn his thorn in the flesh into something useful (Second Corinthians 10:7-10, cf. Ephesians 6:10-12)?

Lesson 4: *Eliphaz Breaks His Silence (4:1-7:21)*

1. What irony does Eliphaz identify in Job's suffering as his speech begins?
2. What does he then identify as the source of Job's confidence and hope? Explain what this means.
3. What is the source of the Christian's confidence and hope (Philippians 4:3-11, Hebrews 4:14-16, 6:19)? What role, if any, does human integrity play in this (First Peter 1:6-9)?
4. Study Job 4:7-11. What is Eliphaz's theory regarding Job's sudden hardships (cf. 5:6)? How did first century folks share it (John 9:1-3)?
5. Is it true that a man reaps what he sows (Gal. 6:7-10)? Does this mean that the righteous never suffer and the wicked never prosper (Hebrews 10:32-35, Matthew 5:45)?

6. Eliphaz suggests that he saw in a dream certain truths about Job and argues that Job is defending himself as a sinless person. Is Job claiming to be sinlessly perfect?

7. Eliphaz offers some helpful advice before he is finished (5:8). What is it? What part of his speech is quoted by the Hebrew writer (12:5)?

8. What are some sources of suffering, according to the following?

- Psalm 107:17:
- Job 1:12-19, 2:6-7:
- Proverbs 14:11:
- Hebrews 12:5-11:
- Ecclesiastes 9:11:

9. Does Job appreciate the words of Eliphaz (6:14-30)? Why or why not? Explain. How should this example affect the way that we approach people who are suffering?

10. What do we learn about temptation and trial in First Corinthians 10:13? Does Job feel like his trials are reasonable (7:17-21)

Lesson 5: *Bildad and Zophar Speak (8:1-14:22)*

1. What does Bildad think of Job's speech so far (8:2)? Does he essentially agree with Eliphaz that Job's sins are behind his punishment? Whom does he also blame for sinning?

2. What does Bildad claim happens to the hope of the hypocrite (8:11-18)? Is Job a hypocrite? Is it true that the hypocritical Christian's hope ends this way (Titus 1:16, Matthew 7:21-23, 23:3-4)?

3. Consider Job's response to Bildad (9:2-3, 14-20, 32-33). Does he satisfy Satan by cursing God? How is God's silence afflicting Job more (13:22-24)?

4. What did Elijah say when he felt abandoned (First Kings 19:1-4, 14-18)? How did God show him it wasn't true?

5. How did David describe the feeling of divine abandonment (Psalm 22:1-2)? Was he really abandoned (Psalm 22:21-24)?

6. What was the reality on the occasion that Paul found God was not affirming his prayerful request for relief (Second Corinthians 12:7-10)?

7. How is Zophar even harsher in his accusations than Bildad and Eliphaz (Job 11:2-6)?

8. What does he recommend Job do to end his suffering (11:13-20)? Is this what Job needs to do?

9. How does Job size up the counsel of his friends (12:1-6; 13:4, 12)? What do you think is essentially wrong with their counsel?

10. What important New Testament doctrine is guessed at by Job in chapter 14? What does he think about the possibility?

11. How does the story of Lazarus and the rich man fulfill Job's vision (Luke 16:19-31)?

7. The list of Job's lamentations grows long—loss of children, prosperity and health; a nagging wife and miserable friends; the apparent aloofness of God to his troubles. Now he adds another; what is it (19:14-22)?

8. Perhaps Satan is holding his breath, believing that Job is near to cursing God as he figured. Is he (19:23-27)? Explain.

9. Give Zophar credit when he gets it right, even if has the wrong target and context. What truth does he utter in Job 20:5? How did Moses act upon this same wisdom later (Hebrews 11:24-26)?

10. Job and his three friends have believed in a theology of immediate, absolute retribution, in which God must always bless or punish men on Earth according to their deeds. Job, however, now knows this is inaccurate. What observation does he make in Job 21:7-15, 22-26?

11. How does his observation correspond with that of the Preacher in the book of Ecclesiastes (1:2, 2:15-16, 4:1-3)?

12. Summarize the doctrine of the three friends as it regards human suffering. Is Job's assessment of that doctrine accurate (21:34)?

Lesson 7: *Third Round of Dialogues (22:1-26:14)*

1. Eliphaz asks Job, “Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that you are righteous?” (22:2-3)? This is a rhetorical question, but Eliphaz’s intended answer is rather pessimistic and defeatist. What is the true answer to that question (Leviticus 1:44-45, First Peter 1:13-16)?

2. How does Eliphaz try to get Job to repent in this speech (22:4-11)? Why doesn’t Job just pretend to do what he suggests?

3. If divorced from his notions of temporal prosperity being ensured by righteous living, Eliphaz’s closing is not far from true. What does he guarantee the penitent (22:21-30; cf. First John 1:5-10 and James 2:7-10)?

4. What does Job believe would happen if he could take his case directly to God (23:1-7)? Why did he think he could not do that (23:8-12)? Why was he hopeful anyway?

5. How is the approachability of God described in Hebrews 4:14-16, Acts 17:24-28 and Psalm 51:17?

6. Consider the list of injustices that Job makes (24:1-17). What does man expect God to do about such injustice (24:18-21)? Why does he not do so all the time (24:22-25, cf. Second Peter 3:8-9)?

7. What do some wicked people do with their “time to repent” (Revelation 2:20-23, Romans 2:1-10)?

8. What does Bildad think of himself (25:1-6)? Is that what God thinks (Psalm 8:3-6, John 3:16)?

9. Eliphaz and Bildad expressed a low estimation of man that God does not share. How can we find righteousness that is meaningful and useful to God?

- Romans 1:16-19:

- Galatians 3:10-14:

- Hebrews 10:35-39:

10. Job renews his appreciation for the majesty of God (26:5-13) before closing this part of his speech with a question (14). Explain his point.

5. What overwhelmed the integrity of these people?
- a. Judas Iscariot (Luke 22:1-6):
 - b. King David (Second Sam. 11:1-4):
 - c. Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11):
 - d. Demas (Second Timothy 4:10):
6. What kind of picture does Job paint of the fate of the wicked in this life (Job 27:11-23)? Is it apparent that Job has generally believed just as his friends still do—that God quickly and physically punishes the wicked for his sins? Why doesn't Job have much to say about Judgment Day, Heaven and Hell?
7. Instead of insisting that God deliver quick, physical retribution upon the wicked, what attitude serves us better (James 5:1-8)?
8. In what endeavors has man been successful, according to Job (28:1-11)? In what does he come up short (12-13; cf. Jeremiah 10:23)?
9. From where then does wisdom come (Job 28:20-28)? What is the difference between worldly philosophy and divine wisdom (James 3:13-18)?
10. What is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 1:7)? Explain.

Lesson 9: *Job Reflects on His Life (29:1-31:40)*

1. What is Job's desire now (Job 29:1-6)?

2. What additional loss does he reveal in this part of his speech (29:7-17)?

3. How is the loss Job describes here often a source of sinful pride to those who have it today? What does Jesus counsel (Matthew 20:20-28)?

4. What mistaken assumption had Job made about the longevity of those prosperous times (29:18-20)?

5. This attitude often translates into complacency. What are the dangers of growing complacent because things seem to be going so well and easily?
 - a. Matthew 26:36-41:
 - b. James 4:13-17:
 - c. Revelation 2:2-4:

6. If there was any hint of pride or complacency in Job, is there now (30:1-10)? What do we need to do to prevent ourselves from falling into pride and complacency (First Corinthians 11:31-32, Second Corinthians 13:5)?

7. Describe Job's condition (30:16-19).

8. Whom does Job hold responsible (30:20-31)? What is his chief complaint?

9. Why do you think God has not found a way to tip Job off about the reason for his suffering?

10. Summarize Job's oath of innocence, in which he indicates that he is not guilty of any sins that would merit the kind of punishment he was enduring.

a. 31:1-4:

b. 31:5-8:

c. 31:9-12:

d. 31:13-15:

e. 31:16-23:

f. 31:24-28:

g. 31:29-32:

11. Job is confident about approaching God with his case, exposing his record and accepting God's judgment. How can we have that kind of confidence, or do we even want it (Hebrews 4:14-16, First John 5:13)?

12. Is our appeal based on self-righteousness or divine mercy (Ephesians 2:8-10)?

Lesson 10: *Elihu's Speeches (32:1-37:24)*

1. Why did three visitors stop answering Job (Job 32:1)? Why did Elihu break their silence (Job 32:2-5)?

2. What do we learn about Elihu in this chapter (32:6-22)? What does he have to add to the debate? Does age always indicate wisdom (Proverbs 3:5-8)?

3. Had Job actually claimed to be completely free of any transgression, as Elihu states (33:1-11)? What has been Job's defense all along?

4. What are the two mediums that Elihu says God uses to get man's attention?

- Job 33:14-17:
- Job 33:19-28:

5. Think back to the beginning; why did Satan think that Job served God? If he now really believes what Elihu ascribes to him in Job 34:9, would that not be an admission the devil was right?

6. What rebellion had Job added to his sin, according to Elihu (34:34-37)? Is Elihu's position really that different from the three friends?
7. Consider Job 35:10-16. Can you see how Elihu makes a few apt points, but misapplies them to Job's case? Explain.
8. Describe the arrogance of young Elihu (36:1-4).
9. Consider Job 36:5-15. Elihu's speech sounds much like that of Eliphaz and the others as he contends that God exalts the righteous and punishes the wicked. What has Job's case taught us about this theory (cf. Hebrews 9:27-28, Luke 16:19-31)?
10. How does Satan use Elihu's speech in Job 36:16-21 to tempt the sufferer's material vulnerability?
11. How is Elihu something of a prophet in Job 37:1-2?
12. Why is it wrong to explain the apparent injustice on Earth as a discredit against God (James 1:12-17, First John 1:5)?

6. Job has longed for the opportunity to present his case before God and now he has it. Does he still want it (40:4-5)? Why or why not?
7. How had Job acted as if he had an arm and voice like God's (40:6-14)?
8. Name the two animals God calls to illustrate his power over the apparent confusion and chaos of the universe (Job 40:15-41:34).
9. What does Job confess (42:1-6)? Has he cursed God yet?
10. All along, Job has complained that God was not answering or rescuing him and we can all be tempted to question God in that way. When are people most likely to question God and enter crises of faith? What are the benefits and dangers, if any, in questioning God as Job did?
11. Would Job have fared better if he had known beforehand why he was being tried? Was Peter helped by that foreknowledge (Luke 22:31-34)? What do we already know about our own trials (First Peter 2:6-9, James 1:3-5)?

6. Now God restores to Job the blessings he had lost (42:9-11). Why doesn't this double restoration ruin the point of the book—that material prosperity is not a hedge when faith is genuine?

7. What had Job said about his relatives and acquaintances while he was suffering (19:13-17)? When do we learn who our true friends are (Proverbs 17:17, Romans 12:15)?

8. What did he name his three daughters (42:12-15)? Can you use a Bible reference book to discern what these names mean? Come on, try!

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9. What is Job's epitaph (42:16-17)?

10. What does Proverbs 17:6 say about grandchildren?

11. What does this book teach us about perspective (Second Corinthians 4:16-5:7)?

12. What is the end intended by the Lord when we suffer (James 5:7-11)?

Lesson 13: *Review*

1. How is Job described in the three verses of the book?
2. What happened to all his possessions? What did Satan hope to accomplish by inflicting so much misery on one person? How did Job respond?
3. What did Job identify as his real problem after his friends arrived (3:25-26, 29:18-20)? Which friend speaks first (4:1)?
4. What does Eliphaz assume is the reason for Job's intense suffering (4:7-9, 5:6)? Does Bildad essentially agree with Eliphaz's theory (8:1-18)? How is Zophar even harsher (11:1-9)?
5. What is adding to Job's misery (13:22-24)?
6. What important New Testament doctrine is guessed at by Job in chapter 14? What does he think about the possibility? How does the story of Lazarus and the rich man fulfill Job's vision (Luke 16:19-31)?

7. What is the theme of Job's complaint (19:6)? Is this accurate? Perhaps Satan is holding his breath, believing that Job is near to cursing God as he figured. Is he (19:23-27)? Explain.

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10. Explain God's response to these discussions (38:1-42:6).

11. What does Job confess (42:1-6)? Has he cursed God yet?

12. What happens to the three friends in the end (42:7-17)? What becomes of Job? What was the end intended by the Lord (James 5:7-11)?

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