

Job

Author of Job

The Book of Job does not reveal its author. The rest of the Scriptures do not say who wrote Job either.

Date

There is much debate about when Job lived. Some argue Job lived prior to the Mosaic Covenant. They suggest the offering of sacrifices by the head of the family rather than by Levite priests proves this. Others dispute this.

The Book of Job is one of the *least understood* Books in the Bible. Many types of false ideas have been drawn from it. For example, some believe it teaches believers should be in a state of extreme suffering and poverty all their lives. Others think its main message is “What you fear comes upon you”. But instead the Book of Job presents one of the *most profound revelations* about *God’s supreme rule*, the *limitations* of the *freedoms* of *Satan* and *humans*, the *place of suffering* in believers’ lives and corrections of *simplistic overgeneralised common* ideas about how God *rewards* and *punishes*.

The main teachings of Job

The main teachings of the Book of Job are:

1. *God’s supreme and absolute rule* as *King* and *Lord* over all human affairs, Satan and the natural creation. In Job Chapters 38-39, God refers to His absolute authority and power over the whole natural creation.
2. The reason for human suffering is only sometimes the result of their own sins. Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar accuse Job of sinning greatly (see Job Chapters 4, 8, 11, 15, 20 and 22) but God does not agree with their comments (see Job 42:7-9). Despite this, God does not fully reveal to Job why he suffered.
God does not operate by a system of divine justice based on fully deserved rewards and fully deserved punishments which are immediately given on Earth.
3. God wants us to trust Him no matter whether we are experiencing catastrophes, lack of prosperity or sickness.
4. God restored health and earthly prosperity to Job and gave him a long life not as a fully deserved reward for his faith and/or obedience (see Job 42:12-17). God gave such blessings by His *undeserved grace*.

Key points about the Book of Job

Note the following key points about the Book of Job:

1. Job was *righteous* but this was by *God's grace* and not by works of Law. Job inherited Adam's sinful nature and had Adam's guilt accounted to him. Also in the end, Job came to realise his own sinfulness. Job 42:6 records Job said: ***"Therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes."*** Also in Job 31:33, Job admitted he did sin.
2. Job 1:1 says Job was *blameless* but this was *not permanent sinless perfection*. It was blamelessness in terms of shunning known evil or sin despite the sinfulness of his own human nature.
3. Job *feared the Lord* – had reverence, respect and great awe of God (see Job 1:1) and *trusted God*. In Job 13:15, Job said, ***"Though He slay me, yet I will trust in Him."*** Even though Job did not perfectly trust God, as seen in his comments and actions throughout the Book of Job, Job 13:15 reveals his strong intention to trust Him in all circumstances.
4. Job understood the importance of *burnt offerings* in relation to sins (see Job 1:5).
5. God has a *Heavenly Court* where He sits as combined Supreme Ruler and Perfect Judge (see Job 1:12 and 2:1-6).
6. Satan had access to God's Presence and Court in Old Testament times (see Job 1:6-12 and 2:1-6). Whether this is still the case can only be speculated about. Revelation 12:7-10 refers to Satan's original fall or to the time of Jesus' death and resurrection or some other time when these verses say Satan was cast out of heaven where he previously accused them before God day and night.
7. Satan not only constantly accuses us before God. He also *accused God* of *bribing* Job with earthly prosperity, health and other blessings. Satan said the only reason Job served God was because of these blessings from Him (see Job 1:9-11 and 2:4-5). Satan argued that if God removed these blessings, Job would no longer reverence but would instead curse God. This is one of the reasons why believers suffer in this earthly life. It is to test if they love God for Him alone or only because of the blessings, prosperity and health He gives them.
8. Satan sometimes uses other people to attack us. Satan used the Sabeans to kill Job's servants and steal his oxen and donkeys and used the Chaldeans to kill his servants and steal his camels (see Job 1:13-15 and 1:17).
9. Job 1:16 records one of Job's servants said ***"the fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and Job's servants."*** Whether this was really God's work or Satan's is debated much. Job's servant said it was ***"the fire of God"***. But maybe he was mistaken in his understanding. Also Revelation 13:13 records a false prophet could make fire come down from heaven. Revelation 13:11-12 reveals this false prophet operated by the dragon or Satan's influence. But then Genesis 19:24-29 reveals God destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by raining fire and brimstone out of the heavens. Genesis 19:24-29 do not say Satan did this.

Also note a strong wind killed Job's children. Psalm 135:7 and 147:18 reveal God controls the wind. But does God's Words in Job 1:12 ***"Behold all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person"*** mean God delegated part of His control over the wind to Satan on this one occasion?

10. After Job lost all his earthly prosperity, his children and servants, he *worshipped God* (see Job 1:20-21).
11. Job's wife was a *dreadful discourager*. She said to him after all these things happened: "...**Curse God and die!**" (see Job 2:9). Satan used Job's own wife to try to trap Job into cursing God. But Job 2:10 reveals at this early stage, Job did not sin with his mouth. But later Job did not speak rightly. He did not curse God but he kept inferring wrong things about God's character and treatment of him. Job 40:2 says the Lord answered Job, "**Shall the one who contends with the Almighty correct Him? He who rebukes God, let him answer it.**" Note also in Job Chapter 10, Job wrongly challenged the idea that God is faithful.
12. Job's condition was terrible. He had lost all his earthly prosperity, his children and his health. He had boils from the sole of his feet to the top of his head. These caused him *much pain* day after day (see Job 2:7). His breath was offensive to his wife (see Job 19:17). Young children despised him (see Job 19:18).
13. Even though Job was righteous by God's grace through faith, he had a *self-righteous attitude* in some ways. Job 32:1 says "**he was righteous in his own eyes**". In Job 31:1-40, Job gave a long talk about how righteous he was in relation to not sexually lusting in his heart after young women who were not his wife, not committing adultery, not treating his servants wrongly, not treating the poor or fatherless wrongly, not trusting in gold, not worshipping the sun or moon, not rejoicing at the destruction of those who hated him, not asking God to curse Job's enemies and not treating travelers badly. In Job 31:33, Job even said how righteous he was in not covering his transgressions and hiding his sins. He was proud of the fact he did not cover or hide his sins.
14. Job longed for a mediator who would act on His behalf before God as Judge (see Job 9:32-33). Jesus Christ would later be revealed as the one and only mediator between God and sinful humans (see 1 Timothy 2:5).

The errors of Job's three religious friends

All three of Job's friends – Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar had similar overgeneralised views of God's dealings with humans. They all believed that if a human was suffering poverty, sickness and/or various catastrophes or tragedies, this was always caused by his sin. While *some* of the things they said were *true* and good, much of their teachings are *over simplistic generalisations*. Job's three friends were *not heathens, pagans, atheists or agnostics*. They could not even be called believers in God in name only. They were like many believers today – people with some false simplistic overgeneralised attitudes to God.

Like too many churchgoers today, Eliphaz based his beliefs purely on his own *mystical spiritual experiences, natural common sense* and *handed down religious traditions*. In Job 4:12-21, Eliphaz said that a spirit spoke in a vision of the night or dream and revealed things about God, the spiritual world and God's attitudes to humans. He also argued Job had experienced these tragedies and was suffering sickness because of his sin (see Job 4:1-8). In Job 15: 17-18, Eliphaz said that some of his beliefs were obtained from man-made traditions – from "**wise men**" and "**their fathers**". Referring to his own personal natural common-sense experiences in life, he says in Job 4:8, "**Even as I have seen those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same.**" He had an overgeneralised view of *sowing and reaping*.

Eliphaz spoke some wonderful things about God (see Job 5:9-16). Also, in Job 5:8 he spoke admirably about seeking God: ***“But as for me, I would seek God, and to God I would commit my cause.”***

Eliphaz also spoke fine words about turning to God from their sins (see Job 22:21-30). Eliphaz uses the Hebrew word “sub” in verse 23 in relation to this returning to God from sin. But once again, He makes the wrong conclusion that Job was suffering because of turning away from God and living a very wicked life. Eliphaz even accused Job of sins which Job had not committed (see Job 22:5-9).

Eliphaz rightly understood that God can prosper and bless with long life sinful people who respond properly to His correction and discipline (see Job 5:17-27). So he was not teaching Job had to obey God perfectly every day to be prospered and blessed. But Eliphaz wrongly believed Job’s sufferings were caused by his sins.

Eliphaz regarded all his own words and those of his friends as expressing God’s wisdom and revelation (see Job 15:8-10). This is even though his teachings were a mixture of:

- some wisdom from God,
- his mystical visions or dreams which he misused,
- his common-sense experience of life and
- man-made traditions handed down from supposed ***“wise men”*** and ***“fathers”*** in the faith.

Bildad’s ideas

Bildad based his beliefs on the *handed-down man-made religious traditions* of the “father” of the “former age” (see Job 8:8).

Bildad claimed Job had experienced calamities, loss of prosperity and sickness because of his sins (see Job 18:1-21). Bildad said Job’s sons had been judged by God with death because of their sins (see Job 8:4).

Bildad’s teaching was based on the idea God always acts in *perfect justice immediately*. He sees no place for God’s grace, mercy, love, longsuffering, patience or forbearance. Bildad *does not see any exceptions* to his view that God rewards the righteous *now* and punishes the wicked *now*. Bildad spoke of seeking God (see Job 8:5) and of the fate of the wicked (see Job 8:20). But his views about God in many areas were too *overgeneralised*. Job agreed with much of what Bildad says but argued no human can be perfectly righteous before God in themselves (see Job 9:2). Job realises he needed the *mercy* of God the Supreme Judge (see Job 9:15).

Bildad correctly argued that no man can be pure or righteous before God. ¹ Bildad’s words in Job 25:4 may even reveal he understood all humans inherit a sinful nature: ***“How then can man be righteous before God? Or how can he be pure who is born of a woman?”***

So Bildad does not realise the *contradictions* in his own ideas. If no humans are righteous and God treats them purely on the basis of fully deserved rewards and punishments, then all humans including Bildad himself should suffer immediate sickness and death. Bildad had no understanding of God’s grace and mercy.

¹ Bildad also had an imbalanced “man as a worm” theology. In Job 25:6, he said a human is like a maggot and a worm.

Zophar's teachings

Zophar had a wonderful revelation of God's greatness (see Job 11:7-9). But he talks as though by his own authority, he can speak infallibly for God (see Job 11:1-20). Zophar had pride in his own spiritual understanding (see Job 20:2).

Zophar argues that Job was being *punished* by God *less than his sins deserved*. In Job 11:6, Zophar said, "...**Know therefore that God exacts from you less than your iniquity deserves.**" Zophar therefore believed Job was suffering because of his sins.

Zophar's answer for Job was repentance and turning from sin. In Job 11:13-14, Zophar said: "**If you would prepare your heart, and stretch out your hands toward Him; if iniquity were in your hand, and you put it far away, and would not let wickedness dwell in your tents.**" In Job 11:15-19, Zophar says the result of such repentance would be the restoration of prosperity, health and blessings.

It is Biblically right to repent and turn from our sins. But note Zophar tells Job to repent for *merely selfish motives*. He tells Job to repent only in order to have God's earthly blessings of prosperity and health restored. Later in Job 42:7, God said He was very angry with what Zophar, Bildad and Eliphaz for the wrong things they said about Him. God was angry with Zophar because he had encouraged Job to repent only in order to receive prosperity and blessings – the very thing Satan accused Job of serving God for.

Job's response and Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar's response

Job answered his three friends by saying in Job 12:6 that some of the wicked were prospering: "**The tents of robbers prosper, and those who provoke God are secure – in what God provides by His hand.**"

But note in Job Chapters 15:17-35, 18 and 20, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar wrongly attack Job's above comments. They say that the wicked never prosper but only suffer in their earthly lives. Eliphaz says in Job 15:20 and 29: "**The wicked men writhes in pain all his days...He will not be rich, nor will his wealth continue, nor will his possessions overspread the earth.**"

Bildad believed wicked people will suffer continual sickness. In Job 18:12-13, Bildad said of the wicked: "**His strength is starved and destruction is ready at his side. It devours patches of his skin; the firstborn of death devours his limbs.**"

Zophar disagreed with Eliphaz and Bildad slightly. He admits the wicked can prosper for a *short time* in this earthly life. In Job 20:5, Zophar says: "**...the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment.**"

In Job 20:21, Zophar refers to the earthly well-being of the wicked being *real* but *not lasting*. He believed the wicked would sooner or later lose all their earthly prosperity. He said Job was an example of all this type of briefly prosperous wicked person.

Jesus Christ's Words about poor Lazarus and the wicked rich man in Luke 16:19-26 contradict this idea. The rich man prospered all his life but was sent to Hades to be punished. The beggar who was poor all his life was saved.

Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar had overgeneralised, simplistic imbalanced views of God's rewards, punishments, prosperity and His treatment of the righteous and wicked in this earthly life.

Elihu

Note in Job Chapter 42, God only criticises the words of Job's three friends – Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar. God does not rebuke Elihu for his words. In Job Chapters 32-37, Elihu speaks some wonderful truths about God. A few of these are recorded below:

1. In Job 33:14-30, Elihu refers to God speaking in *many different ways* in order to *turn* humans from their sins and to save them from perishing and going to the Pit. These verses show God guides by dreams and visions and other means. Also these verses refer to salvation by grace. Verse 24 speaks of God's *grace* and a *ransom* to prevent a sinner going down to the Pit. Verse 28 refers to God *redeeming* or purchasing someone's soul from going down to the Pit.
2. Job 33:14 reveals God can speak and humans *not perceive* or *know it*.
3. In Job 36:9-11, Elihu teaches that God will prosper by His undeserved grace those who turn from their sins to Him. Read these verses. Being prospered by God's grace on the condition of turning from our sins is different from meriting prosperity as a fully deserved reward.
4. In Job35:6-8, Elihu says man's sin or righteousness does not benefit God. This is because God is *totally self-sufficient* and *needs nothing*.