

## The Sovereignty of God and the Suffering of Job

### Job<sup>1</sup>

*[21] ... "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." [Job 1:21]*

1. **Introduction:** The suffering of the righteous.

2. **Author:** Unknown... But, maybe Moses because: The story comes before Moses' day, some of the words are characteristic of Moses' other writings, an early talmudic tradition ascribes Moses as the author (BaBa Bathra), the theme of suffering fits Moses' concern for the suffering of the Israelites in Egypt, the land of Uz is adjacent to Midian where Moses spent 40 years contemplating the suffering of the Israelites, and Moses possessed the authority and interest to commend this non-Hebrew story to Israel.

3. **Date:** A. When did these events take place (*The Patriarchal Period- 2,000 B.C.*)? The events seem to occur before the exodus or the giving of the law. B. When the record may have been composed (*The Mosaic Period- 1,500 B.C.*). Did Moses compile Job while he was living in Midian? Did he get the information from records of conversations in Uz by Elihu (1485-1445)?

4. **Recipient:** Maybe Moses compiled the book of Job during his 40 years in the wilderness of Midian for the suffering Israelites who were being oppressed by Pharaoh.

5. **Location:** Job lived in Uz (Northern Arabia) and his friends came from nearby countries.

6. **Purpose:** There are 3 reasons Job was written...

A. **The Historical Purpose:** Moses possibly saw a parallel between God's dealing with Job as to why He allowed the people of Israel to suffer. Job was composed in the face of the suffering of God's people to provide them consolation and vision. Job reminds God's people of His providential purposes in allowing their pain.

B. **The Doctrinal Purpose:** The presence of pain is allowed by the providence of God for the purifying and perfecting of His people, and for the glory of His great name.

C. **The Christological Purpose:** We see Christ presented in the book of Job through Job's cry for a mediator (9:33, 33:23), through Christ being acknowledged as Redeemer (19:25), and Job needs someone who can explain the mystery of suffering by suffering (the just for the unjust) (1 Pet. 3:18) and thus bring victory over the plague of evil and pain (Rev. 21:4).

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<sup>1</sup> For more see: A Popular Survey of the Old Testament by Dr. Norman Geisler

**7. Main Message:** The book of Job is about the suffering of the righteous. It asks: What is the significance of suffering? What is the purpose of pain? Why do we experience calamities?

-Job gives several answers to these questions: 1. The author suggests that suffering is pernicious (satan is behind it) (1-2). 2. Job suggests that suffering is a puzzle (sadistic attitude) (3). 3. Job's friends suggest that suffering is penal (sin must be punished) (4-31). 4. Elihu suggests suffering purifies (shortcomings occasion pain) (32-37). 5. God shows that suffering is providential and that He has allowance/designed it (sovereignty of God is its source) (38-42).

-There is some truth to all of these. But, Job's friends were wrong about Job suffering for his sins. God allows satan to inflict suffering, even on those who have not brought it on themselves by sinful living, so that in His providential purposes He can purify and perfect His people, and glorify His name.

**8. Outline:** Job is divided into 3 sections: The affliction of Job (1-2), the discussion with Job (3-41), and the restoration of Job (42). The 3 sections deal behind the scene, on the scene, and beyond the scene of Job's suffering. Without the first and last section, the middle section would be an insoluble mystery. Once we understand the movement of satan behind the scenes in instigating suffering and the activity of God beyond the scene in rewarding the sufferer, then the suffering on the scene becomes both understandable and tolerable.

### **I. The Affliction of Job: Behind the Scene (1-2)**

**1. The Afflicted- Job:** Job was rich and respected, healthy and wealthy, righteous and religious. He was the least likely candidate to be inflicted with calamity brought on by himself or a good God.

**2. The Afflicter- satan:** The ultimate source of evil in the world is personal (satan). He is the accuser of God's people (Rev. 12:10), and his sneering attack on Job prompted God's providential permission of Job's suffering.

**3. The Affliction-** Job loses his sons and daughters (all 10 children), his sheep and herds, his servants, and finally his health. Sitting on a pile of ashes, scraping the bleeding boils on his blistered body, Job maintains his faith and declares Job 1:21. Job later curses the day of his birth, but he never curses God (3).

### **II. The Discussion With Job: On the Scene (3-41)**

**1. The Lamentation of Job (3):** After 7 days of silence from Job's friends he finally speaks

**2. The Accusation of the Friends (4-31)**

**A. Eliphaz the "theologian"**- bases his arguments on a vision of God's greatness.

**B. Bildad the "traditionalist"**- based his views on the time honored principles of God's justice.

**C. Zophar the "moralist"**- based his opinions on the consensus of human wisdom.

**D. Round One (4-14), Round Two (15-21), Round Three (22-26), Job's closing monologue (27-31)**

**3. The Intervention of Elihu (32-37)**

**4. The Revelation of the Lord (38-41)**

### **III. The Restoration of Job: Beyond the Scene (42)**

**1. The Repentance of Job (42a)**

**2. The Reward of God (42b)**

*[12] Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. [James 1:12]*

*[11] Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful. [James 5:11]*