

# The Wisdom Literature

Lesson #2

Job 1:1-14:22

## Outline

### I. **Prologue (1:1-2:13)**

- A. Job's righteousness (1:1-5).
- B. Job's testing (1:6-2:10).
  1. Satan accuses Job (1:6-12).
  2. Job's faith in spite of tragedy (1:13-22).
  3. Satan accuses Job again (2:1-6).
  4. Job's faith in spite of physical suffering (2:7-10).
- C. The arrival of Job's friends (2:11-13).

### II. **Speeches (3:1-27:23)**

- A. Job's lament (3:1-26).
- B. First round of speeches (4:1-14:22).
  1. Eliphaz (4:1-5:27).
  2. Job (6:1-7:21).
  3. Bildad (8:1-22).
  4. Job (9:1-10:22).
  5. Zophar (11:1-20).
  6. Job (12:1-14:22).

## Notes

### **Job 1:1-5**

- Job's wealth is described in terms similar to those used of the patriarchs, the stress being on animals and servants. Job was richer than any of the people of the East. He was a well-known learned person among the easterners.
- According to vs. 5, Job, like the patriarchs, functioned as a priest for his family. He took his sacrificial obligation seriously, viewing it as an atonement for sin.
- In offering sacrifices, Job included sins of the heart, for he made special offerings just in case his sons had secretly cursed God. The matter of cursing God will be a key theme later in the development of the narrative.

### **Job 1:6-2:10**

- It is not Satan but the Lord who initiates the testing of Job; for the Lord's statement that Job is His servant implies more than just servitude; it means God and Job are in a covenantal-type relationship based

on solemn oaths. The purpose is not just to test Job as an end in itself but to give him the opportunity to honor the Lord.

- Unknown to Job, God and Satan had discussed his case. Had Job known about this conversation, he would have had no room for doubt or concern. He would have known that God was using him as a weapon to refute Satan's lies. However, he had to take his trials by faith.
- Job feared God, not with terror but with a humble trust, and he separated himself from evil. Furthermore, Job did not permit his money and possessions to take the place of God.
- It is interesting to note that Satan is not all-knowing; for had he known how this contest would end, he would have never entered it. It is actually good to know that Satan cannot predict the future.
- Satan lost the first round of the contest. For the third time the Lord triumphantly described Job as a unique servant (no one like him), a pure and devout man who has become even stronger as a result of the testing. God said that there was no immediate sinfulness in Job that called for punishment.
- If God would permit Satan to afflict Job's body, he would be proven to be a fraud; and he would curse God to His face. The contest was about to take on a new intensity. God placed Job in the hands of their mutual adversary but limited his power.
- Job's reply to his wife is remarkable in the compassion he showed toward her and in his total acceptance of God's will for his life. He might have accused his wife of blasphemy but chose to accept it as a statement of desperation. To curse God was essentially a way of denying that He is God. On the other hand, Job received with meekness whatever prosperity or disaster God might send.

### ***Job 2:11-13***

- It took time, possibly months, for the news to pass by word of mouth and for the friends of Job to come (cf. 7:3). The friends arranged a meeting so they could join together to console Job.
- When the friends assemble near Job's home, they are stunned by what they see. Job is disfigured beyond recognition, at least from a distance. The three friends had come to show grief and console Job. It does not appear that they were ready for what they encountered.
- The friends immediately went into a drastic form of mourning usually reserved for death. They tore their robes of nobility, wailed, and threw dust into the air. Then they sat in silence before Job for seven days and nights. Like the elders of fallen Jerusalem, Job's friends sat on the ground with dust on their heads and kept silent (Lamentations 2:10). For one of them to speak prior to Job would have been in bad taste.

### **Job 3:1-26**

- From his first complaint in this chapter to the end of the argument, Job asked to die (6:8-12; 7:15-21). Job wants the day of his birth lost in total darkness, not even numbered anymore as a day in the calendar.
- For a godly man to wish he were dead should not surprise us. Moses (Numbers 11:10-15), Elijah (1 Kings 19), and Jonah (Jonah 4:3) all wanted to die. God's ways are above us, and Job realized that God was in control, and that these events were part of a loving plan. When we cannot understand, we can worship and trust Him, knowing that God had made His purposes in suffering known.
- Job frames his complaint with a series of rhetorical questions which show a progression of thought. In addition to the progression of thought, there is also a symmetry of ideas in vss. 11-26.
- His suffering is so intense both physically and mentally that death in comparison would be an exquisite pleasure, like finding hidden treasure. The last two verses indicate that Job had often thought about trials and feared he might have to face them. Job was not living in carnal security or false peace, for his faith was in the Lord and not in possessions. Nowhere in the book does Job deny the Lord or question His holiness or His power. That one as great as Job should have such a struggle of faith is a source of support to all of those who are similarly afflicted.

### **Job 4:1-14:22**

- Eliphaz's first speech (4:1-5:27).
  - Each one of Job's friends use the same argument in one way or another: (1) God blesses the righteous and afflicts the wicked; (2) God has afflicted Job; therefore, (3) Job must be wicked.
  - Eliphaz, a man from Teman, an Edomite city noted as a center of wisdom (Jeremiah 49:7), on the surface spoke as if he thought Job was basically righteous and that his sufferings were temporary. But in reality Eliphaz was not convinced of this (4:7-11). He bases his thinking on a special vision he once experienced (4:12-21), so we might say that Eliphaz argues from personal experience. Eliphaz saw mortals as almost nothing in God's sight, hardly more than an insect that may perish unnoticed.
  - 5:9-16 is in the form of a hymn on the nature of God as the Lord of creation and salvation. Eliphaz admonished Job to appeal to God who does only what is right. He punishes the unjust and delivers the lowly. This is exactly what Job believed, but the advice did not help him understand why he was suffering so intensely. Since it implied he was getting what he deserved, it only added to his confusion.

- Job's reply (6:1-7:21).
  - After each man spoke, Job replied, except in the case of Elihu, where God Himself stepped in to answer. Job's argument went something like this: (1) I believe God is just and powerful as you do; (2) but I am not a hypocrite -- I know of no sin between me and God; (3) I would argue my case with God but I cannot find him; nevertheless, (4) I will trust Him, for He will vindicate me either in this life or the life to come. It took a great deal of faith to argue this way in the light of his circumstances. No wonder James 5:11 points to the endurance of Job.
  - Job starved for the right words that, like food, could bring strength and nourishment. The food Eliphaz dished out turned Job's stomach. Despite his misery, Job's major concern was for the needs of his spirit. If only he could hear words that would nourish his soul rather than sicken him more.
  - Job had spent months of futility and nights of tossing in misery, nights that seemed to drag on endlessly. Yet almost in the same breath Job described his purposeless life as passing with incredible speed, a complaint heard on the lips of those who are older or any who know their days are short.
  - Throughout his speeches, he appeals for sympathy and kindness. His friends did not show love and understanding; to them Job was a spiritual mystery, not a suffering believer. He also appeals to his basic integrity. In each of his speeches, Job denies that he is secretly a sinner. He knows his own heart and he confesses that his friends have cruelly misjudged him.
- Bildad's first speech (8:1-22).
  - Bildad picks up the argument in 8:1-7 and very bluntly states that God does not do anything unjustly. His one and only point was that Job's suffering was the proof of his sinfulness. In 8:8-10, Bildad argues from tradition, and then quotes a series of "old sayings" to support his argument.
  - Bildad thought he heard Job say that God perverts justice. Job did have problems regarding divine justice, but he had not accused God of being unjust. Job found it difficult to understand God's justice. Although Job did not claim perfection, he considered himself a blameless man, but Bildad was sure that God had rejected Job. Since God does not reject blameless people, Job could not be one. Therefore, he must be a hypocrite. The situation, however, could be remedied if he would turn to God.
- Job's reply (9:1-10:22).
  - In 9:1-13 Job intended to show that his problems were not due to an ignorance of God's ways. Job fervently believed that he was innocent

of any sin that would warrant the kind of punishment he was enduring. But he was frustrated in his attempt to vindicate himself. God's wisdom was too profound and His power too great for Job to debate in court.

- 9:25-31 is an expression of deep despair. Job was unable to experience any good in a day; there was not a glimpse of joy or a smile, only one unending blur of suffering. Since God arbitrarily chose to treat him as a criminal, what could he do to cleanse himself? Even if he were able to cleanse himself, God would plunge him again into a slime pit so that even his clothes would abhor him. Job appeals for a chance to confront God. He wants a chance to deal with God but he cannot find Him (9:2, 33). When one truly feels the terrible despair of Job and his searching for a mediator, we can be so thankful that we have Jesus Christ who represents us before God (1 Timothy 2:15).
- In chapter 10 Job continued to mourn his terrible condition. Life had become an unbearable burden. In his bitter anguish he determined to speak out, once again directing his words to God. The God whom he imagined was so angry with him was not angry with him at all; but in his current state of mind, he reverted back to his original wish to have died at birth.
- Zophar's first speech (11:1-20).
  - Zophar was a severe man. Like Bildad he lacked compassion and was ruthlessly judgmental. He considered Job's words mockery, for he thought Job was claiming flawless doctrine and sinless perfection. He rebukes Job and tells him he needs to repent and get right with God. All three "friends" make the same mistakes: (1) They fail to enter into Job's sorrows and sympathize with him; (2) they have a rigid concept of God and His works, one that is not fully true; and, (3) they are too dogmatic and proud to listen to Job and honestly examine their own beliefs.
  - Zophar attempted a very biting statement to try to "get through" to Job. In a deeply sarcastic tone, he labeled Job a witless, empty-headed man with as much chance to become wise as a wild donkey has to be born tame.
  - It was arrogant for Zophar to assume he knew why Job was suffering; he had reduced the solution of this very complex problem to a simplistic formula -- every pain has a sin behind it. He even suggested that if one repents and gets right with God then the struggles and troubles of life will go away. This mistake is made by many well-meaning Christians who fail to distinguish between forgiveness which cancels the guilt of sin and the consequences of a sinful life which produce trouble and distress.

- Job's reply (12:1-14:22).
  - The most natural break in thought occurs in 13:20. Job first answered his friends (12:1-13:19), then addressed God (13:20-14:22). He matched Zophar's harshness with sarcasm.
  - Zophar wanted to know if Job could possibly fathom the mysteries of God (11:7-8). Job said that God's works were indeed mysterious and strange. He could not figure them out, but he knew as much about them as the others. These "wise men" had only a superficial knowledge of God, yet they sat in judgment of him.
  - Job was confident that given the opportunity he could prove his case before God, for he knew his friend's accusations were false. Despite the unfortunate statements he had made earlier about God (9:16-17, 22), Job still believed that this could be reconciled if only he could argue his case directly with God.
  - He appeals to his faith in God. Had Job denied God or cursed God, the problem of suffering would have been solved, for his friends would have known that God was punishing Job for his unbelief. But Job had faith (13:15). So great was Job's faith that he states that God will vindicate him in the resurrection in the next life, if not in this life (19:25-29).
  - At the end of chapter 13 he again lost grip on his confidence and reverted to a hopeless feeling. He pled with God to let His creatures alone until their hard labor on earth was over.
  - In 14:7-22 Job turned again to death as the only way out of his situation. A tree may be cut down and its stump appear to be dead; yet with water it springs to life and sends out new shoots. However, it is not the same for humans. When one's lifetime runs out, it cannot be renewed. But Job suggested that God could provide a remedy by simply taking his life until his anger was over and then, by resurrection, call him back from the grave.