

JOB: Introduction and Outline¹

Literary Style

Along with Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Solomon (or Song of Songs), and Ecclesiastes, Job is part of the Hebrew Poetical books (also called the Wisdom Literature). Job has been called one of the most remarkable books in all literature. Alfred Lord Tennyson stated, it is "the greatest poem ever written, whether in ancient or modern literature..." Martin Luther called it, "Magnificent and sublime as no other book of scripture." Irving Jensen says,

Job is classified as dramatic poetry. The book is recognized even in the world of secular literature as a magnificent dramatic poem. Thomas Carlyle, a Scottish essayist and historian (1795-1881), wrote, "There is nothing written, I think, in the Bible or out of it, of equal literary merit" (Irving Jensen, *Job*, Chicago: Moody Press, 1976, p. 9).

Why has the book of Job received such rave reviews? First, Job has a unique structure. It contains a prose-poetry-prose pattern which is unique among books of the Bible.

Second, Job contains a very rich vocabulary. Many Old Testament words are found only in the book of Job. In fact, it has 110 words not found anywhere else in the Old Testament, more than any other Old Testament book.,

Five different words are used for lions (4:10,11), six for traps (18:8-10), and six for darkness (3:4-6; 10:21,22). As Gordis has observed, the writer "knows the names of the constellations, of metals, and of many precious stones. He is familiar with...the technical language of the law courts, and the occupations of mining and hunting." (Robert Gordis, *The Book of Job: Commentary, New Translation and Special Studies*, New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1978)

References to insects, reptiles, birds, beasts; weapons and military strategies; musical instruments; means of travel; geography; whirlwinds, dew, dawn, darkness, clouds, rain – all reveal the profuse knowledge and the vocabulary of the author of the book of Job (Roy B. Zuck, *Job*, Chicago: Moody Press, 1978, p.7) .

Third, Job uses similes and metaphors extensively. The following examples illustrate this: the brevity of life is depicted by a "weaver's shuttle" (7:6); one's breath (7:7); a cloud (7:9); a shadow (8:9, 14:2); a runner (9:25); an eagle (9:26), and a flower (14:2) (Zuck, *Job*, p.7).

Historicity of Job

Was Job an actual historical person or was he fictional? Bible scholars hold views for and against the historical existence of Job. According to a Jewish rabbi, "Job did not exist and was not created...he is a parable." Maimonides, the greatest Jewish scholar of the Middle Ages believed, "Its basis is a fiction, conceived for the purpose of explaining the different opinions which people held on Divine Providence."

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the New American Standard Bible.

Conservative scholars generally believe that sufficient evidence does exist for the historical existence of Job. First, this fact is plainly declared in Job 1:1 and 42:16,17. Also, writers of Scripture regard Job as a historical being (Ezekiel 4:14, 20; James 5:11). Finally, specifications of places and names are given. Parables or allegories are not so specific (i.e., Luke 15, Luke 10 – the Good Samaritan).

Does it really matter whether or not Job really existed? Yes, because the answer to this question affirms or undermines the trustworthiness of Scripture. If Job did not exist, then the book is merely a moral story which may or may not have meaning to real life (such as the story of Santa Claus). Because Job really existed it makes God's Word more reliable. It is not just telling a story, but instead it is providing lessons and insights into the life of a real man which concentrate on the importance of man's relationship to God.

Date or Time of Job's Life

Views on the time when Job lived range all the way from the patriarchal age (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – approximately 2100 to 1900 B.C.) to the sixth century B.C.

For me, the following factors suggest Job was written at the time of the patriarchs. First, given that Job really did exist, then a time can be established for when he lived. The length of Job's life corresponds roughly to the length of life of the patriarchs. All his children were grown, so Job may have been about 60 years old at the time they were killed. After his calamities, he lived another 140 years (42:16). Thus his age of about 200 compares with Terah, Abraham's father, who died at the age of 205; Abraham, who lived to be 175; Isaac, who was 180 when he died; and Jacob, who died at the age of 147. Joseph was 110 years old when he died, and the lives of men since that time have been shorter.

Also, Job's wealth was reckoned in livestock (1:3; 24:12), which was also true of Abraham (Genesis 12:16; 13:2), and Jacob (Genesis 30:42; 32:5).

Third, that Job was the priest of his family (1:5) would suggest that an official national priesthood was not yet in existence in Job's area.

Fourth, Job's daughters were heirs of his estate along with their brothers (42:15). This, however, was not possible later under the Mosaic Law (Numbers 27:8).

Fifth, the book of Job includes no references to the Mosaic institutions (priesthood, laws, Tabernacle, special religious days and events, and so on).

Finally, Job contains no mention of the Law, Levitical priesthood and Levitical sacrifices. As well, there is no mention of the children of Israel, Moses or the exodus.

Authorship

The author of the book of Job is unknown. The Bible gives no hints anywhere in the Scriptures as to his identity. Several suggestions have been made as to the possible author. Moses has been suggested because of the similarities between Job and Genesis, and Moses' familiarity with the desert. Solomon has been suggested because of his interest in poetical literature (e.g., Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon). Perhaps the author was an eyewitness to Job's suffering, maybe Elihu. Others hold that the story of Job was handed down orally and not put into written form

until around the time of Solomon. A less common view is that Job wrote the book himself. It was not uncommon to write about one's self in the third person. And Job could have written it later in life, after his problems were over and past.

According to Irving Jensen, "The book's authority and dependability rest not on human authorship, but on divine authorship. Only God could reveal the conversation between Himself and Satan, recorded in chapters 1-2." (Irving Jensen, *Job*, p.7)

Message of the Book

The primary message of Job is the suffering of the righteous, the godly. Why do the godly suffer? How can their suffering be reconciled with the righteousness and sovereignty of God? If God is love, and He loves His children, why are they afflicted? This question has a three-fold answer.

First, God permits the suffering of his servants for His own glory. This is seen in the first two chapters. God received glory to Himself when Job, enabled by His grace and by His power, did not sin even in the midst of the trials through which he passed.

Second, God permits the righteous to suffer for their own good. In the end, it was actually a positive experience for Job. The sufferings changed him for the better and he received great blessing. And yet, there is a mystery of suffering. No two cases are exactly alike. God does not have just one pattern or mold. His ways are higher than ours.

Third, God *always* has a divine purpose in the believer's suffering. God never allows His people to suffer needlessly. God has purposes to be accomplished, lessons for His servants to learn. It takes time to learn these and for the purposes to be accomplished.

The book of Job has a universal appeal. It addresses a universal problem – suffering, but it also has valuable secondary lessons. It shows the inability of the human mind to completely understand the problem of suffering. The limitations of human philosophy try to fit together the jigsaw puzzle without all the pieces. All the human figures in the drama speak in total ignorance of Satan's charges against Job, Job's piety and the divine permission to Satan to prove his point if possible. According to the *New Bible Commentary*, "Against this background of the prologue Job's sufferings appear, not as evidence of the divine judgment upon him, as his friends sought to establish, but as evidence of the Divine confidence in him" (p.387).

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF JOB

- I. Prologue: Job's test, 1:1-2:13
- II. False comfort by the three friends, 3:1-31:40
 - A. First cycle of speeches, 3:1-14:22
 - B. Second cycle of speeches, 15:1-21:34
 - C. Third cycle of speeches, 22:1-31:40
- III. The speeches of Elihu, 32:1-37:24
- IV. God's speeches, 38:1-42:6
- V. Epilogue: God's rebuke, Job's restoration, 42:7-17

I. Prologue: Job's Test (1:1-2:13)

Introduction: The Man Before the Process

The book of Job begins with a prologue. A prologue is an introduction or preface, which explains the purpose of the book. The story begins with a look at Job, the man (1:1-5).

Job's Piety (Righteousness) (1:1)

Job was a man, perfect and upright. He was blameless. This is not sinless perfection, but complete sincerity and integrity of character. He responded obediently to God and lived according to godly principles. He also accepted full responsibility for his actions.

Job's godliness was both positive and negative. It was positive in that he feared and loved God. He was aware of the sovereignty of God. His godliness was negative in that Job shunned or turned away from evil. He avoided or withdrew, fled evil. According to Schaper, "True piety does not deny the negatives, but it does not begin with them or major in them either" (Robert Schaper, *Why Me God*, Glendale CA: Regal Books, 1974, p.14). Job was a completely sincere man, with no sins that needed to be covered up.

Job's Prosperity (1:2-5)

Job's family was a picture of harmony and love. Job acted as "priest" for the family, concerned about each person's spiritual welfare. Schaper says, "The daughters' sharing in the family activity was unusual, since women were not normally given this privilege. Feasting in the various homes was probably an annual celebration, perhaps at the New Year." (Schaper, *Why Me God?*, p. 14).

Job had many possessions. His household was very great, with many servants and their families. He had a large number of livestock. But as great as Job's possessions were, they did not corrupt him.

Job's Reputation (1:3)

Job was considered "the greatest of all the men of the east." He had many material goods. He was also godly and honest. In addition, he was strong, upright, just and gracious. He was known as a great leader far and wide.

Debate Between God and Satan and the Results

The controversy between God and Satan (1:6-2:10, NASB) centred on two aspects for Job: his possessions and his person. After an introduction to Job and his situation, the scene changes to a different realm. Jehovah is seen in His majesty, attended by the angelic hosts. The invisible world is depicted here as a royal court, with the King (God) seated on His throne amid His servants. This parallels with the statement in 1 Kings 22:19, where Jehosaphat is speaking. "I saw the Lord sitting on His throne, and all the hosts of heaven standing by Him on His right hand and on His left."

Job 1:6 describes those before God as "sons of God." The term means angels. They are seen bringing in their reports to God. The "sons of God" do not represent an "advisory council", but are there to give an account of their ministry, to report to God.

Satan is not called a son of God. He is named separately and is clearly distinguished from the "sons of God." The word "Satan" means "adversary." It is a mystery and problem to some that Satan has access to the presence of God. Was he not cast out of heaven? Still on many occasions in Scripture Satan is depicted as standing in the Lord's presence to accuse God's servants (see Zechariah 3:1,2). Satan will be discussed further later in this paper.

God stated that His servant Job was an upright man (1:8). God was pleased with Job's life, but Satan, always out to accuse, offered a different opinion of Job. He argued that Job was only upright because he had never suffered any loss. Satan argued, "But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face." (1:11) Satan, however, did not know Job's heart. God did!

Satan was reminded that he had been unable to corrupt Job, even with all of Job's wealth. Satan only sneered, saying God had bribed Job into loyalty to Him by making it worth Job's while. God accepted Satan's challenge. He put Job into Satan's hands for a limited period of time and with a limited power. God knew that Job would be found true. Thus Satan went forth and delivered his blows, to Job's possessions and to Job's person.

Job's Possessions (1:13-22)

Satan struck four blows upon Job's possessions. First, he attacked Job's oxen and donkeys (1:14-15). Since Job was a farmer, most of his wealth was invested in his livestock. When the oxen and donkeys were destroyed, Job's wealth greatly diminished. Some of Job's servants were killed along with the oxen and donkeys.

Second, Satan attacked Job's sheep. These were Job's source of food and clothing. According to Job 1:16, "The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep..." Some believe this is something similar to what destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah since it is unlikely lightning would consume a whole flock of 7000. Perhaps it was a prairie or brush fire. The term "fire of God" is a Hebraism (Hebrew idiom) meaning "a great fire." More of Job's servants died in the "fire".

Next, Satan attacked Job's camels, a herd of 3000. Camels were Job's source of commerce and travel. The camels were raided by enemies (the Chaldeans) (1:17). Yet more servants died in this attack.

Finally, Satan attacked Job's family. Job's sons and daughters were a source of joy to him. The family appeared to be close. Suddenly his children were dead, struck down by a "great wind" (1:18,19).

Satan attacked with lightening speed. Job had no opportunity to recover from one disaster before the next one struck. In the midst of prosperity, happiness and godliness he experienced great pain and loss. In a very short period of time Job was stripped of all that he loved and possessed.

What was Job's reaction? He met tragedy with the integrity and dignity of a man of faith. He "tore his robe and shaved his head" (1:20) (signs of mourning). Then he did something totally

unexpected – he *worshipped*. In 1:21 Job says, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked I shall return there. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD." Job did not sin. Satan did not succeed.

Job's Person (2:1-8)

When Satan did not succeed in his first attempt, he went back to God for yet another opportunity to make Job fall. Satan accused God of placing limitations on him that prevented him from being successful. Satan says, "Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. However, put forth Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh; he will curse You to Your face." (2:4,5). So God gives Satan permission to attack Job's body, but not to the point of death. Will Satan now succeed?

Job 2:7 states that Job became afflicted with boils all over his body. It was a terrible disease. He used a piece of broken pottery as a form of surgery to scape himself. What a sad transformation! The greatest man in the East, so rich and influential, is now stripped of all, reduced to abject poverty, afflicted with an extremely painful disease. He considers himself an outcast. Yet Job does not curse God.

In Job 2:9 Job's wife has had all she could take. She says to her husband, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!" Before judging her too harshly we must consider a few major points. First, she, too, had lost her possessions and her children. All she had left was Job, and he was suffering terrible pain and anguish. She probably felt helpless to relieve his pain yet, at the same time, wished she could take it from him. Remember what a loving family they were before Satan struck. She was upset, distraught, angry at the circumstances which had overtaken them.

What was Job's reaction to his wife? He calmed her and answered lovingly even though he himself did not fully understand what was happening to him. But in all of this he did not sin (v.10).

Profile of Satan

From a study of Satan in the book of Job we can more fully understand who he is. Six major characteristics can be seen in Job's account (adapted from Theodore Epp, *A Man Tried as Gold*, pp.20-31).

First, Satan is accountable to God (1:7,8; 2:2,3). The angels presented themselves to give an account before God. The accuser, Satan, is also subject to divine authority. Though unwilling, he still must report as do the others. He is subordinate to the divine control of God. He does not have the freedom to pursue his own agenda to whatever extent he chooses. His appearing before the throne is neither his privilege nor is it presumption. He is required by God to do this. He is obligated to stand before God and give account of his conduct.

Second, Satan's powers are limited against a believer (1:10; 2:4,5). Satan was aware of Job before God's question. He had tried, tested, and attacked Job before. The only way he could explain that Job had not fallen, had been immune to his attacks, was that God had put a hedge about him. Satan had to admit, when questioned by God, that he had been unsuccessful against Job.

Third, Satan does not have divine powers. He is not omnipresent. He cannot be everywhere at once. He is a created being and therefore is "localized," although he moves with lightning speed. He has hosts of demons, invisible spirit-agents, whom he organizes and uses (see Ephesians 6:12). Satan is not omniscient. He does not have the wisdom of God to know all things. God sees the heart. He knows a person's mind, the secret thought and intents of the heart. But Satan cannot. He thought or pretended he knew Job's heart and mind. He thought he knew why Job was serving God and what he would do if those things were removed. But Satan was wrong.

Fourth, Satan is under God's control (1:12, 2:6). The waves of the sea are limited or restrained (Job 38:11) and so is Satan – just as free and restless – and just as limited. God permits him to go only so far, and no further. According to 1 Corinthians 10:13, "...God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it." (NIV) Satan could not touch Job without permission.

Fifth, Satan is limited in his actions. There is a divine limitation. Even though God gives Satan permission to do certain things, He still places a definite limitation on Satan's actions. Satan was *allowed* to afflict Job. Satan has no power against a believer beyond what God permits.

Last, Satan is a slanderer, an accuser. God said Job was perfect and upright, that he feared and loved God. Satan suggested, in the form of a question, that this was not really the case (Job 1:9,10). Instead he presented Job as selfish and self-seeking. By asking questions, Satan was inferring wrong motives and a false heart. Satan's questions brought insinuations that were intended to defame Job.

In spite of Satan's attempts, Job stood firm in his faith. His possessions were gone, his body was in pain, his wife did not support (or at least understand) him, but he still would not sin against God.

The Three Friends Come (2:11-13)

After a period of time, the Bible does not say how long, three friends came to visit Job. They were Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, Zophar the Naamathite. They made an appointment (2:11), but the Bible gives no indication of how they knew of Job's condition or how they arranged to meet. This was a time of loneliness for Job. He was forsaken by everyone (see 19:13, 15, 19). He speaks of months of suffering in 7:3.

When the friends arrived, they were shocked. They did not even recognize Job. He was sitting on an ash heap, disfigured and distorted by disease and suffering (1:12). But when they realized it was Job, they expressed their sympathy by weeping and tearing their clothes (1:12).

This is followed by a very impressive seven days of silence. "Then they sat down on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights with no one speaking a word to him, for they saw that *his* pain was very great." (2:13) They showed true friendship in their silence. Seven days represents the period of mourning for the dead (Genesis 50:10, 1 Samuel 31:13)

Campbell Morgan says, "I like the three friends for three reasons: they came to visit Job when he was in trouble. They had enough sense to keep their mouths shut. When finally they spoke, they said what they had to say about him to him. And yet their mute presence evidently afforded little comfort."

According to Andrew Blackwood, "Never has human despair been depicted with deeper insight and greater power" (Andrew W. Blackwood, *Devotional Introduction to Job*. Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1959, p.62).

It is with the friends' arrival that the prologue ends and a dialogue begins.

Job has been brooding in silent misery over the tragedies that have befallen him. He cannot turn for strength to his children – they are dead. He cannot turn to his wife – she has urged him to curse God and die. Even God seems not to care...When the comforters come, Job believes that at last he is with someone who will understand;...that he can speak his thoughts in confidence, that his friends will sympathize (Blackwood, *Devotional Introduction to Job*, p.47).

II. False Comfort by the Three Friends (3:1-31:40)

Job chapters 3 through 31 illustrate the development of the book. After his friends had been sitting silently with him for seven days Job broke out into his lament, which according to Ellison, is "one of the most moving passages in the Bible" (H.L. Ellison, *From Tragedy to Triumph; The Message of the Book of Job*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971, p. 30). According to S. Ridout, the dialogue of Job represents progress and development in the outworking of Job's thoughts.

We have in this section the largest, and in many respects, the most complicated part of the book. It has been well named the Entanglement, for it is a mass of argument, denunciation, accusation, suspicion, partly correct theories, with here and there flashes of hope and faith—all in the language of loftiest poetry... (S. Ridout, *The Book of Job*. New York: Loizeaux, 1948, p. 33).

Rather than studying each of the friends' speeches and Job's replies in order, I will approach the balance of the book as follows:

Job's lament

Eliphaz responds

Bildad speaks

Zophar adds his comments

Summary of the friends' views

Job's answers

Elihu's speech

God speaks

Job's final answer

Job's Lament (Job 3)

Job broke the silence with his three-fold lamentation. He "opened his mouth."(3:1) This means far more than that he started speaking. It implies "the speaking of deep thoughts carefully considered beforehand – feelings long repressed and finally uttered" (Schaper, *Why Me God?*, p.3).

First, Job laments his very birth (Job 3:1-10). He was sorry he was ever conceived, ever born. Job released his feelings with an honest expression of the pent-up confusion and despair he felt concerning his adversities, despair which seems to have been building through a solid week of

profound thought. Job is in anguish. And anguish is rarely logical; it only feels. Later (Job 6:3), he confessed that some of his expressions had been foolish and fruitless, but it seemed to help him to put into words his true feelings, however impulsive they were.

Second, Job lamented his existence (Job 3:11-19). He says he wished he had been “like a miscarriage which is discarded...As infants that never saw light.” (Job 3:16) In other words, “I wish I had died at birth, been still born or miscarried.”

Third, Job lamented his life (Job 3:20-26) . He wondered why God did not simply forsake him and kill him now.

When Job finishes, he still had not cursed God. He certainly had stopped blessing and praising God, but he did not curse Him as Satan had predicted he would. Note that there is not any thought of suicide in Job's lament. In spite of his terrible circumstances, Job could not, would not, take his own life. Suicide was seen as totally unacceptable in Israel.

Ellison notes that Job had a deep theological problem. If his "theology" was correct – God rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked – then Job was a great sinner. But he knows he is not. If he listens to the testimony of his own heart, then his theology – upon which he has based his whole life – must be wrong. This thought is more agonizing than the thought that he might be a great sinner. His whole foundation is shaken (H.L. Ellison, *From Tragedy to Triumph*, p. 30).

Eliphaz Responds

Eliphaz comes to Job sympathetically, politely, and is very orthodox in his beliefs. He may be the least judgmental of Job's friends (which may not be saying much!). Schaper says,

Eliphaz is probably the most attractive of the friends. He is the first speaker in each sequence and he seems to be the most sophisticated and learned. Probably the oldest of the three, he identifies himself with the wise (15:9, 10). You may feel that he is more considerate of Job than the others, although it is shocking how cutting and cruel each of these "comforters" can become (Schaper, *Why Me God?*, p. 37).

The first speech (Job 4,5) occurs in two main parts. His main argument (Job 4:8-5:7) is that suffering is always the direct result of sin, and is God's judgment on it. This is the law of retribution. On what does Eliphaz base his argument: his own experience. He refers to "what I have seen" several times (Job 4:8, 5:3,27; 15:17). For example in 4:8 he says, "According to what I have seen, those who plow iniquity And those who sow trouble harvest it."

He tells Job that he is reaping what he has sown. This seems similar to what the Apostle Paul wrote in Galatians 6:7, "...whatever a man sows, this he will also reap." According to Schaper, however, there is a difference.

But a closer look reveals an amazing difference in the applications of Eliphaz and Paul. Eliphaz insists that a present harvest of trouble and sorrow is proof of evil seeds. Paul looks for harvest in God's final day when the true results of faith and love will most certainly be reaped. Paul is encouraging the man of faith; Eliphaz is discouraging any person who suffers now (Schaper, *Why Me God?*, p. 38).

After these statements, Eliphaz appeals to a mystical religious experience. Although experience may be associated with religion, the danger is that experience may become the yardstick with which to measure the religion of others.

In his advice to Job, Eliphaz says "If I were in your shoes... 'I would seek God, And I would place my cause before God' " (5:8). In many ways this is a very beautiful passage (5:8-16) which describes the faithfulness of God in doing many great things. Eliphaz applies it all to Job. "Behold, how happy is the man whom God reproveth, So do not despise the discipline of the Almighty." (5:17-27)

For Eliphaz suffering was only and always a punishment, a judgment for sin, a sign of divine displeasure. He did not realize that suffering could also be a token of God's love for Job, a blessing in disguise, "For those whom the Lord loves he disciplines..." (Hebrews 12:6). Eliphaz did not realize that Job was suffering because he was a saint, not a sinner. Job's godly character was seen and strengthened in holiness.

Eliphaz's second speech (Job 15) to Job was more severe. He did not change his arguments, but became more scathing, insisting that he knew what the problem was based on his own experience. In this chapter Eliphaz has forgotten the relative kindness and consideration he showed for Job's feelings in chapters 4-5. He ignored most of what Job has said, and picked out one point of attack – Job's insistence that God owes him justice.

The third speech (Job 22) is a rehashing of the same theme – Job must have sinned. Eliphaz now leaves behind innuendos, hints, and generalizations and in response to Job's repeated challenge, makes wild accusations that he cannot know to be true and cannot prove (see 22:5-11).

The breakdown of Eliphaz at this point prepares the way for Job's quick victory. Bildad does not follow on the same line. All the wind is taken from his sails. He lapses into vague generalizations and simply repeats himself over and over.

Bildad Speaks

If Eliphaz is the voice of experience, then Bildad is the voice of tradition. He is less polite and more severe than his friend. He is also somewhat dogmatic and unkind, even cruel at times. He rests his philosophy on tradition (see Job 8:8-10), "a succession of traditional maxims or proverbs" (Gleason Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, p.79).

Bildad's first speech is found in Job 8. It is an appeal to appearances – the death of Job's children indicates divine judgment for sin. Job's continuing trouble (trials) "prove" that he cannot be righteous. Note that in Job 8:5,6, Bildad says there is still hope for Job – if he is pure in heart and will seek God.

In Job 8:8-19 Bildad appeals to tradition (history), and then in vs.20-22 he appeals to Job's own integrity – "God will not reject a *man of integrity*..." (v.20) But Bildad's speech, like Eliphaz's, missed the mark. He did not help Job.

Bildad's second speech (Job 18) does not help his argument at all. It has no actual reasoning whatsoever – just proverbs. Bildad lashes out impatiently and the speech is really rebuking Job more than anything else.

Bildad's third speech (Job 25) is actually an evasion. He avoids Job's challenge to "...prove [him] a liar, And make [his] speech worthless?" (24:25). Instead he resorts to inferences – Job must be sinning since all this trouble has come his way.

If Job's friends had continued to sit silently with him and not comment on what they did not understand, as they did they did for the first seven days, they would have been of more help to Job. And perhaps they themselves would have reached the place Job ultimately reached and not have been rebuked by God. It would have been more appropriate for Job's friends to pray for him than attempt to "straighten him out."

Zophar Adds His Comments

In Job 11 and 20 Zophar adds his comments – rude, insensitive as they were. He is the dogmatist, the arrogant opponent who attempts to turn opinions into facts. He makes assumptions which are so dogmatic that he does not expect to be opposed (see Job 11:3-6).

Zophar's first speech (Job 11:1-6) is a condemnation of Job: for talking too much, for lying and for sinfulness. In 11:5,6, Zophar sarcastically taunts Job that he wishes God would answer Job because God would be against Job, not for him.

Zophar suggested that God has actually let Job off easy – "Know this: God has even forgotten some of your sin." (11:6 NIV). Zophar may have had a high view of God, but he did not have a true sense of God's character at all or of His ways and purposes. Zophar called on Job to repent.

In his second speech (Job 20), Zophar continued his tirade against Job saying he deserved his punishment for he was an evil doer and a hypocrite (Job 20:29).

Summary of the Three Friends' Views

The following chart accurately summarizes the position each friend took in speaking to Job.

Eliphaz	Experience	Moralist	Attitude: <i>If</i> Job were not sinful, trouble could not have come.
Bildad	Tradition	Legalist	Attitude: Job <i>must</i> be sinful since trouble has come.
Zophar	Assumption	Dogmatist	Attitude: Job <i>is</i> sinful and deserves his affliction.

In insisting that God was dealing with Job because of his sin, the friends made five basic mistakes.

First, they all held basically the same belief – suffering is *always* the direct result of sin and that a man's prosperity or adversity is the evidence of God's favour or disfavour.

Second, according to Baxter, "They all have a far too narrow and rigid view of Providence; yet are so sure that their view is right that they look at resistance to it as resistance to God" (J. Sidlow Baxter, *Explore the Book*, p. 50).

Third, they all want to prove that goodness and wickedness are always rewarded and punished *in this present life*. They do not see beyond this life, to a future judgement.

Fourth, they all failed to give a satisfying answer to Job, to meet his need (Job 32:12).

Fifth, they all condemned him. God's friends misunderstood and misrepresented God's nature and providence. Therefore, they were rebuked by God. Gleason Archer asks whether there is any adequate psychological motive for their persistence in carrying out this attack against Job so long? Why were they so desperate to prove Job guilty? Job's disaster placed them in a real dilemma and jeopardized their own security.

"If a man of such high reputation could suffer so devastating a misfortune" the same thing could happen to them. It was important to them to extract from Job a confession of some great sin, so that his predicament could be attributed to the retribution of God. Without this, they had no assurance that such a calamity would not befall them (Gleason Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, p. 439).

Job's Answer

Job also believed that his trials came from God. Four important points can be noted. First, in each of his three speeches in the first round, Job asked, "...Why have You [God] set me as Your target" (7:20); "Let me know why You contend with me." (10:2); and "Why do You hide Your face" (13:24)

Second, in every one of his speeches, Job affirmed his innocence. "...I have not denied the words of the Holy One." (6:10); "I am guiltless..." (9:21); "...there is no violence in my hands..." (16:17); and "I hold fast my righteousness..." (27:6)

Third, in his first five speeches, Job stated that God had afflicted him. "For the arrows of the Almighty are within me... (6:4); "For He bruises me with a tempest And multiplies my wounds without cause." (9:17); and "He has also kindled His anger against me And considered me as His enemy." (19:11) Job felt that God was cruel and would not leave him alone.

Fourth, in six of Job's eight speeches, he wants to present his case to God. "If one wished to dispute with Him, He could not answer Him once in a thousand *times*." (9:3); "...I desire to argue with God." (13:3); "O that a man might plead with God..." (16:21); "Oh that my words were written! Oh that they were inscribed in a book!" (19:23); "I would present *my* case before Him..." (23:4); and "I sign now my defence— let the Almighty answer me" (31:35, NIV). Job justified his lament in 6:5, "Does the wild donkey bray over *his* grass, Or does the ox low over his fodder?"

Job then moved on to reprove his friends. In Job 6:14-17, he says,

"For the despairing man *there should be* kindness from his friend; So that he does not forsake the fear of the Almighty. "My brothers have acted deceitfully like a wadi, Like the torrents of wadis which vanish, Which are turbid because of ice *And* into which the snow melts. "When they become waterless, they are silent, When it is hot, they vanish from their place."

Job is saying that a well spoken can word calm a raging person, heal a broken spirit, guide a confused man, solve a difficult problem or save a lost soul. All of us have the power to do this if we choose to do so, but as with many other things we have often chosen to corrupt the gift of speech.

Job often resorts to sarcasm, such as in Job 16:2-6,

"I have heard many such things; Sorry comforters are you all. "Is there *no* limit to windy words? Or what plagues you that you answer? "I too could speak like you, If I were in your place. I could compose words against you And shake my head at you. "I could strengthen you with my mouth, And the solace of my lips could lessen *your pain*. "If I speak, my pain is not lessened, And if I hold back, what has left me?"

We see more sarcasm from Job in Job 12:2,3; 13:2,4,5; 30:1 and 23:6-12.

All of this most likely occurred before the giving of a written revelation, and it shows two necessities. The first is the necessity of a revelation. Job 31:35 states, "...let my accuser put his indictment in writing." (NIV) In Job 23:3, he says, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him, That I might come to His seat!" In other words, in view of the holiness of God and dreadfulness of sin, a written revelation, an infallible standard of right is needed.

Second, the necessity of the incarnation is clear. Job requests an "umpire," a mediator, a superhuman interpreter to give us a more complete understanding (Job 9:33). He cries out, "For *He is* not a man as I am that I may answer Him, That we may go to court together." (9:32) Note Job's Messianic hope and longings. It is a longing which was fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. In Job 16:19 he states, "Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven, And my advocate is on high..."

Probably one of the most outstanding statements Job makes is found in Job 19:25-27, "As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, And at the last He will take His stand on the earth. "Even after my skin is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall see God..." Job has a view of eternity, of a hereafter, which is not alluded to by anyone else in the book of Job. There is a glimmer of confidence, a hope.

III. The Speeches of Elihu (32:-1-37:24)

Elihu's speech is found in Job 32-37. Some questions need to be asked before launching into a discussion of Elihu. Was Elihu present all the time? Why did he wait until this point to speak? Elihu says, "Behold, I waited for your words, I listened to your reasonings, While you pondered what to say. I even paid close attention to you; Indeed, there was no one who refuted Job, Not one of you who answered his words." (32:11-12) In Job 32:3 Elihu was angry with with Job's three friends because they had found no answer and yet condemned Job anyway. This suggests that Elihu had been present throughout the speeches of the friends and of Job.

Why did he wait until this point to speak? In Job 32:4, Elihu waited to speak to Job because the friends were years older than he. Therefore, he waited out of respect to their age. He was much younger than they.

With whom was Elihu angry? In 32:2 he was angry at Job, and in 32:3 he was angry at the friends. Elihu has been criticized by some commentators for his anger, his wordiness, and some think his egotism. Elihu was angry at Job because he justified himself rather than God. He was angry at the friends because they condemned Job without having an answer for his suffering.

Elihu's speech introduces a new approach. This is followed a little later by a new answer and then a new appeal. In 32:9, Elihu agrees with Job that only God gives true wisdom. He is convinced that wisdom is not given only to the elderly, but may be given to younger people as well. It could be given to him. In 32:8 he said that there is a "spirit in man" capable of receiving inspiration; capable of receiving wisdom from God. It appears he believes he is now receiving that direction, that wisdom, that inspiration from God. Note 32:8-10, "But it is the spirit in a man, the breath of the Almighty, that gives him understanding. It is not only the old who are wise, not only the aged who understand what is right. Therefore I say: Listen to me; I too will tell you what I know."

Compare this with Job 36:2-4, "Bear with me a little longer and I will show you that there is more to be said on God's behalf. I get my knowledge from afar; I will ascribe justice to my Maker. Be assured that my words are not false; one perfect in knowledge is with you."

Elihu believes God is equipping him or has equipped him to be the very spokesman Job needs to hear at this time, to lead Job out of his despair, out of the darkness he finds himself in. Notice also that Elihu believes he is so inspired that he can fulfill Job's longing for an advocate between God and himself.

In Job 33:6 Elihu says, "I am just like you before God; I too have been taken from clay." The King James version says, "I am according to thy wish in God's stead." He felt that he was just that spokesman for God. He could fulfill that need, be God's instrument, inspired of God to deal with Job.

At the same time, he can take Job's part and feel with him because, as he says, "I too have been taken from clay." He is showing his acceptance and consideration of Job. This approach differs from that of the three friends, with their disconnected and stubborn philosophies. They had played the role of judges. Elihu would be a brother. So his new approach is that of an understanding brother, rather than a harsh distant judge.

Elihu's new answer begins properly in Job 33. These are long speeches and just reading through them, we can get lost. But follow some of these verses and try to feel and see what he is saying. He begins in Job 33:12, "But I tell you, in this you are not right, for God is greater than man." Therefore, man has no right to demand an explanation from God. This is the beginning of Elihu's different approach.

Elihu does not condemn Job. He shows that suffering, rather than being an expression of God's anger, flows from His tenderness and love. God is greater than man. He has greater ways of doing things than man understands. Therefore, wait for Him. Elihu however, does point out to Job where he had gone wrong in justifying himself rather than God. In Job 33:8-9 he says, "Surely you have spoken in my hearing, And I have heard the sound of *your* words: 'I am pure, without transgression; I am innocent and there is no guilt in me.'"

Job did just this in several verses (see Job 10:7; 12:4; 16:16-17; 31:6). In 33:10 Job made a rather harsh statement against God, "Behold, He [God] invents pretexts against me; He counts

me as His enemy." Job believed God saw him as an enemy and so made up charges against him. So Elihu, kind as he is, shows Job that he was wrong, not God. Job was wrong in charging God. Elihu states specifically and directly, "Behold, let me tell you, you are not right in this, For God is greater than man." (33:12) Job is not right in the position he has taken in saying these things against God. God is greater than man.

God does speak to man if they will listen. According to 33:14, "Indeed God speaks once, Or twice, yet no one notices it." Why does He speak? Job 33:17 says He speaks so that He can turn us from our wicked ways and keep us from pride. He keeps back man's soul from the pit and his life from passing into Sheol. So, Elihu emphasizes, Job has been wrong in charging God.

God is greater than man and God does speak to man with the intent to help, implying God has spoken or has been trying to speak. According to Job 33:19-22 God also corrects. He deals with man. He does not abandon man. He reprimands, he corrects, always with the intent of helping, healing and restoring. As the last part of Job 33:26 says, God intervenes that "He may restore His righteousness to man."

Toward the end of Job 33, Elihu openly considers himself to be the interpreter mentioned. What Job has lacked has been interpreter, someone to interpret all of this to him. He feels that he, Elihu, is that designated interpreter. In Job 33:31-33, he says, "Pay attention, O Job, listen to me; Keep silent, and let me speak...Keep silent, and I will teach you wisdom." And there is no doubt that Elihu *does* help Job. He does correctly interpret whole situation to Job and Job recognizes and accepts it. Job calms down and listens. He quietens himself before God and then in a few chapters he is ready to listen when God does speak from the storm.

Elihu's answer differs from that of the three friends in that he sees a different purpose in suffering than they do. They all held to the theory that all suffering is punishment for past sin. Elihu sees suffering, not always as being punishment, but as being corrective, refining, restoring nature. This does not imply that Job had sinned. God would purify even good servants. God would make good people better. God deals with man lovingly and trials can come to improve man.

In Job 34 Elihu argues that in dealing with man or even afflicting him, God *always* acts righteously and with impartiality. Notice Job 34:10-12, "Therefore, listen to me, you men of understanding. Far be it from God to do wickedness, And from the Almighty to do wrong. "For He pays a man according to his work, And makes him find it according to his way. "Surely, God will not act wickedly, And the Almighty will not pervert justice." Again, God *always* acts righteously and with impartiality. Elihu goes on in 34:23,24,27 to state that such affliction comes even to the mighty men of the earth.

Job is refusing the methods of God (34:33-37). He has not submitted to God's working. He is fighting God, says Elihu. Elihu is not exactly gentle with Job. He tells him clearly that he has not been submitting to the trials and testing. He urges Job to submit to God's ways as correction with good purpose rather than to be rebelling against God's ways as being unrighteous, undeserved punishments.

Elihu says God is trying to teach Job something. The suffering is being prolonged because of Job's bitter unsubmitiveness. He urges Job to submit to God's dealings with him. In 34:16,17, Elihu implies that Job is displaying the same attitude as the wicked – a wrong attitude. Elihu presents a new approach and new answer.

Third, Elihu presents a new appeal. Elihu's appeal is for Job to develop a new attitude toward his suffering. It is a new outlook. The three friends kept pointing to something in the past, some hidden sin. Elihu forgets the past and looks to the present. Job was all upset, defending his integrity, his uprightness, fighting against God. Elihu tells Job to change his present attitude.

Elihu accepts Job's claims of innocence, but points out that his present attitude and present spirit are wrong. He told Job that his suffering was not from past sin at all, but that he is preventing God from fully accomplishing His plan due to his wrong attitude.

Elihu appeals for a change of attitude on three fronts. First, he appeals for a *teachable humility*. There seems to be some pride in Job's insistence of innocence. Elihu emphasizes that Job should be humble before God.

Second, Elihu appeals for *submissive patience*. He points out that God's ways are right and proceed from His perfect, absolute understanding. Job 34:21-23 states, "For His eyes are upon the ways of a man, And He sees all his steps. "There is no darkness or deep shadow Where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves. "For He does not *need* to consider a man further, That he should go before God in judgment." God's ways are always right. Therefore, it is wise for man, including Job, to submit to God and have patience to learn.

Third, Elihu appeals for Job to have *faith in God*, rather than in some "reasonable" explanation. He points out that God is all-knowing and all-righteous. So it is better to have faith in God, trust in Him, rather than in some explanation for the present. "The Almighty—we cannot find Him; He is exalted in power And He will not do violence to justice and abundant righteousness. "Therefore men fear Him; He does not regard any who are wise of heart." (Job 37:23-24)

Not all of Elihu's views are totally correct, For example, when he says that God seems to be or is unaffected by man's sin or uprightness (35:6-7). Translators have difficulty with this passage, but what Elihu seems to be saying does wonders for Job.

In the last part of Job 36, Elihu launches into a very beautiful description of God. Evidently as he tries to describe the greatness and power of God, he is looking at the skies, seeing God's handiwork. He exclaims this in Job 36:27-30:

He draws up the drops of water, which distill as rain to the streams; the clouds pour down their moisture and abundant showers fall on mankind. Who can understand how He spreads out the clouds, how He thunders from His pavilion? See how He scatters His lightning about Him, bathing the depths of the sea. (NIV)

Some suggest that this part of Elihu's speech was really a description of what was happening around him at that moment. He describes a coming storm and when God does speak, He does so out of the midst of a storm.

The first illustration is of rain and the spreading of the clouds over the skies. The rain is then accompanied by thunder. Suddenly there was the flash of lightning followed by a deep darkness. The picture Elihu paints is one where the violence of the storm gradually increases. The thunder seems to get louder and louder and the lightning more brilliant.

Then after Elihu has built this tremendous picture of the storm, he turns to Job (Job 37:14). He asks Job to consider God's greatness and man's insignificance. Elihu attempts to interpret God's meaning to Job with this illustration. But Elihu is not quite equal to the task, for in the middle of the discussion God interrupts. Elihu is in "high gear" (Job 37:23,24) when God cuts him off.

What did Elihu accomplish? He really does Job a tremendous service. He has calmed Job's heart and mind. He has brought Job to the place of listening. He has approached Job with consideration, with acceptance, as a brother. He has seen a new possibility in this whole experience, a new answer that God has not been punishing but helping Job. He has appealed to Job to change his attitude.

Why doesn't Job answer Elihu? There is no time; God begins to speak. But could it also be that Job had no reply? He had nothing to say. His misconceptions of God's providence and God's plan in sending suffering had been resolved. Many of his questions had been answered and things were more clear. Elihu has done a marvellous job of preparing Job for God to speak. And God spoke to Job.

IV. God's Speeches (38:1-42:6)

R.N. Carstenson states,

God's speech emphasizes the futility of debate as a means of solving the riddles of the justice of God in the paradoxes of history. God speaks not so much , argumentatively as peremptorily (finally, authoritatively). He does not intend to enter the debate so much as to show its irrelevance (R. N Carstenson, *Job; Defense of Honour*, p. 113).

The storm had spread across the skies while Elihu was speaking, and God spoke out of the whirlwind. How did He do this? No one knows. But we can be assured that God still speaks today to those whose hearts are tuned to Him.

What does God say? We expect that He would begin with some explanation to Job, some reason for all his sufferings, but God does not give one. God makes no attempt whatsoever to explain. There is not even an argument. The answer comes in a series of questions, all of which point to God's power in creation.

It is an awesome, over-powering speech. The questions serve to compare the infinite power of God to create and control creation with the smallness and helplessness of Job. According to Blackwood, skeptics find God's approach very amusing (Andrew Blackwood, *Devotional Introduction to Job*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1959, p.143). Job asks the question, "Why did my children die?" God answers with the following:

39:19 – "Do you give the horse *his* might? Do you clothe his neck with a mane?"

39:27 – "Is it at your command that the eagle mounts up And makes his nest on high?"

40:15 – "Look at the behemoth, which I made along with you..." (NIV)

"But," says Blackwood, "Job did not consider the questions amusing. He came to see himself in perspective."

J. Sidlow Baxter points out that God has a very orderly progress in this speech as well. It can be divided into four specific parts, as follows:

1. In relation to the earth (38:1-18)
 - vs.4-7 – its creation
 - vs.8-11 – oceans
 - vs.12-15– the morning
2. In relation to the heavens (38:19-38)
 - vs.19-21 – light and day
 - vs.22-30 – the elements
 - vs.31-32 – stars and constellations
 - vs.33-38 – laws of nature
3. In relation to living creatures (38:39-39:30)
 - vs.39-41 – beasts and birds of prey
 - vs. 39:1-12 – beasts preyed upon
 - vs. 13-25 – birds and beasts of beauty
 - vs. 26-30 – fierce vultures
4. In relation to special cases (40:1-42:1)
 - vs.6-14 – proud wicked doers
 - vs.15-24 – Behemoth
 - ch.41) – Leviathan
 - vs.42:1 – Job himself

“Job would grasp the intent and purpose of this speech. By making manifest Job's ignorance of God's natural government, it shows Job's total inability and helpless to pass judgment on God's moral government” (J. Sidlow Baxter, *Explore the Book*, p. 69).

What is the significance of this speech from God? It is not an explanation of Job's pain. It is not an answer to his questioning. It is not a solution to the problem of suffering. Four major points, however, seen very clearly in God's speech.

First, Job was not meant to know the explanation of his sufferings. Had he been told of what was going to take place in his life, and if he had been assured that the outcome would actually be positive (Job 42), his whole response and reaction would have been affected. Job would not have undergone any actual test of character. There would have been no place for the genuine exercise of faith. The prologue reveals the explanation for Job's sufferings before they ever began, so that when the explanations are withheld from Job, we can appreciate that an explanation *could have been given* quite easily if God had so desired. So the lesson to be learned is this: there are some things about human suffering which God cannot possibly explain to us without destroying the very purpose they are designed to fulfill. He simply says, "Have faith in Me."

Second, God showed His care and concern for Job. Though the voice in the whirlwind gave no explanation, *it gave evidence* that God had been watching over His own, that God loved Job. How sorry Job must have felt that he had allowed himself to say such rash things, that he had permitted the three friends to aggravate him to the point that he had questioned the righteousness and concern of God. Hearing God's voice, Job knew immediately how wrong he had been.

Third, God wanted to give Job a more powerful and vivid picture of His glorious nature. Job had been trying to understand God. The voice from the whirlwind showed him the truth – he would never be able to understand God. He must simply trust God. Faith is to trust God, even in the absence of any explanation for our painful circumstances.

Fourth, God would bring Job to the end of himself. Compare Job 40:1-5 to Job 42:1-6. Job recognized the all-powerful God and submitted to His will. Job then proceeds to answer God.

Job's Answer

In Job 42:1-6, Job gives a magnificent response, which must be quoted in full to be appreciated:

“Then Job answered the LORD and said,

“I know that You can do all things, And that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.

‘Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?’ “Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.”

‘Hear, now, and I will speak; I will ask You, and You instruct me.’

“I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; But now my eye sees You;

Therefore I retract, And I repent in dust and ashes.””

In Job 42:2, Job acknowledged Jehovah's supreme power and His perfect and complete knowledge. Then in Job 42:3, he quoted the question that God asked in Job 38:2, and acknowledged that God's rebuke was accurate. Then in Job 42:4, Job apologizes. He tells God he is sorry. He did not blame his friends or his mouth, but himself. He did not blame the circumstances. He accepted full responsibility – he only blamed himself.

V. Epilogue: God's Rebuke, Job's Restoration (42:7-17)

The poetry in the book of Job concluded at the end of Job 42:6. Job's confession, where he repented in dust and ashes, brought to a conclusion the main part of the book, the drama. Next is the prose portion – the epilogue.

Job Is Vindicated and Rewarded

Job is no longer considered the “bad guy.” He is cleared. God again calls him “My servant.” (v.7) For some time Job had felt the standing he had enjoyed with God was gone. He knew what it was earlier to be the servant of God, in good standing with Him, but for all this time he had wondered where God was and if he had become God's enemy.

The whole episode is now over. God has spoken to him and dealt with him. Job has repented and is back into restored fellowship with God. This mirrors the words of Hebrews 12:11, “All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.” It is important to notice that there is an afterward, and this afterward is planned.

God Dealt With the Three Friends

In Job 42:7 God addressed the eldest of the three friends, Eliphaz, and said, "My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends, because you have not spoken of Me what is right as My servant Job has." God turned from Job to deal with the three friends. Victory has been won in the soul of Job.

Out of fairness to the friends, one must say that their intentions were right. They put themselves out, they came thinking that they could help him and that they could help him be restored.

How did God deal with them? Instead of punishing them, He chooses Job to minister to them. He appointed Job as an intercessor on behalf of the three friends. Job 42:8 states,

"Now therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, and go to My servant Job, and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves, and My servant Job will pray for you. For I will accept him so that I may not do with you *according to your folly*, because you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has."

If ever anybody had to eat humble pie, these three men did. But they came and they humbled themselves and came to Job with that offering. And Job, who had been forgiven by God, was ready to minister to others and he prayed for them. Note, too, that they had tried to restore Job to God by discussion, by argument, by philosophy. He was appointed to restore them by prayer. So Job prayed for them as they brought their offerings.

The Rewards of Spiritual Concern for Others

Victory was won in Job's life. He had been forgiven. But he had not yet been completely restored. It was when Job prayed for others that his prosperity was restored. (see v.8 in the NASB.)

It is clear that Job had to first forgive his friends. He did forgive them, but now he is interested in their spiritual well-being as well. He is praying for them. It is in that sacred act of intercession for others, bearing the burdens of others, that Job's own "captivity" ended.

There is a lesson to learn in this: When his attention was focussed on the spiritual interests and well-being of others, God released Job and delivered him. When he stopped thinking only of himself – defending, justifying himself – God delivered him from his suffering. It was in the act of giving himself, that he himself received great blessing.

The Priesthood of the Believer

The doctrine of ministering to others, as Job did to his friends, is a New Testament doctrine. It is known as the priesthood of the believer. In 1 Peter 2:5,9, Peter is writing to believers,

"you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ...But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light"

The priests were appointed to serve God and to serve man. The priest in the Old Testament, the High Priest, could only come into the holy of holies (the presence of God) once a year, and even then not without blood – bearing the blood of the sacrifice.

Christians are priests unto God, having direct access to the throne of God, immediately, without more shedding of blood. Through the blood of Jesus Christ Christians come directly into the presence of God, to serve God and to serve man.

Job exercised a ministry of reconciliation. He carried on a service on behalf of others. He ministered to those three friends. Even though he had been criticized, judged, and ridiculed by them, he still served them. Job provides a very important illustration – the priesthood of the believer, the standing Christians have before God. It is not a private relationship, but one of service to others. Christians are priests unto God to minister for others.

The Sincerity of the Three Friends

Still more can be said of the three friends. First, notice their sincerity. They submitted to God and they submitted to Job. They had to acknowledge that they had been wrong and Job had been right. And then they had to bring their offerings.

The size of the offering is incredible when compared to other offerings required in the Old Testament. They were to take seven bulls and seven rams. In Exodus 29:14,18, the worshipper was required to bring one bullock for a sin offering. These men had to bring seven.

One other time in the Old Testament, in Ezekiel 42:22, seven bulls were required for the sins of the entire nation. So the size of the offerings required of Job's friends seems very large, but they did it without any argument.

The Restoration of Job's Well-Being

God first restored Job's friendships when Job prayed for his three friends. And then the Lord increased all that Job had by two times. The Lord restored the well-being of Job so that all his brothers and sisters and former friends came to feast with him. They rejoiced that Job had twice as much as before. The Bible does not say how these were restored. God probably did not make Job's fortune miraculously appear. Job probably had to work hard for it over the course of many years. God blesses hard work. Faithfulness to responsibilities and to duties is important. Job lived 140 years, and after the time of his suffering he worked hard and God blessed him. (vs. 14,15)

Job's family was restored too. He had another family of ten: seven sons and three daughters. He named the first daughter Jemimah and the second Keziah, and the third Keren-happuch. And “in all the land no women were found so fair as Job's daughters.” (v.15)

The Patience of Job

James 5:11 says, “We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.”

What descriptive terms, what one word can we use to accurately describe Job? Maybe the word "patient" would fit best. Synonyms for patience are "endurance," "perseverance," "forbearance," "resignation," and "submission." Job patiently endured.

Job endured. There were times when he did not appear very meek, but he endured. When these sufferings came upon him Job's theological foundations were shaken. He could not understand why these things were happening. But he still endured.

James is writing to believers who were undergoing great hardship, adversity and opposition. They were being persecuted for the Gospel. And James is encouraging them to stand fast in the faith. He is encouraging them to hang in there, to not give up in their belief in God just because things were not going well. So James uses Job as an illustration of patience, endurance and perseverance.

Being a Christian in the 21st Century is not always easy. But remember the patience and endurance of Job. God is very caring and full of mercy. He keeps His promises without exception. Three other New Testament references make this same point.

1 Corinthians 15:58 – “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in vain* in the Lord.”

Colossians 1:10-12 – “so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.”

“2 Thessalonians 3:5 – “May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ.”

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