

01a JOB

This is the 28th of April, 2006. We begin a new study tonight in the book of Job. The material before us, as with any part of Scripture, is only going to be meaningful if God the Holy Spirit is able to take it and make it worthwhile in our souls.

So we will pause, as is our custom, to clear our minds and prepare our hearts and seek the ministry of God's Spirit as we go to the Lord in prayer. Father, what a privilege it is to spend time refreshing and restoring our souls at the oasis of spiritual truth to be found in your Word. We thank you for the ever-present ministry of your Spirit, who is constantly there to help us remember, understand, interpret, and apply the truth of your Word, and we ask your blessing on us as we begin the study of this great book of the Old Testament this evening, that we will find in it the truth that will move us ever closer toward the goal of Christlikeness, that our lives can reflect His glory and your glory and fulfill your purpose in this age and in the ages to come.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. The book of Job is a very unique book.

Many things have been said about this book in terms of its literary quality. It has been heralded as a masterpiece unequalled in all literature by some. There's a very famous quote by Thomas Carlyle.

He said, There is nothing written, I think, in the Bible or out of it of equal literary merit. It has been heralded as a great piece of poetry. It has been heralded as a great story, a great drama.

In the canon of Israel, it is unique because unlike the Pentateuch, unlike the Prophets or even the Megillot or the Rolls, the wisdom literature and so forth like Song of Solomon, Ruth, Ecclesiastes, Esther or Lamentations, all of these books get read in the synagogue on one occasion or another. The Prophets and the Law are read regularly on special occasions at feasts and so on. You have readings from Esther, for example, at Purim, Ruth, Ecclesiastes and so on.

The Book of Job is never read in the synagogue. It's never an occasion where they say, Okay, let's get the Job scroll and read it out loud. This book is generally only read by the educated class, the higher levels of attainment, because the Hebrew in which it is written is lofty and difficult.

The authorship of the book has been disputed. People have claimed all sorts of different authorship. The rabbis speculated.

The general rabbinic consensus was that Moses wrote it or at least recorded it in its final form. Most scholars, most biblical interpreters, believe that the story circulated in an oral form before it was set down in writing or in some sort of previous form, much as the content of our Gospels. It clearly circulated as oral history for a time before the canonical Gospels were written.

So the question is, how old is it? What is the time of Job? When did these events take place? And then how did the account come into its present form? Structurally, and by the way, we'll answer those questions as we go forward. But structurally, it's a unique book. And if you're taking notes, what I'm talking about right now is the uniqueness of Job.

It's unique in the Old Testament canon. It's unique in its language. It's unique in its treatment by the Israelites.

And it has a unique structure. It is a mixture of prose and poetry, of both monologue and dialogue. You have the prologue in the first two chapters.

You have the epilogue in the last part of the last chapter, which is narrative prose. You have a narrator who speaks and establishes a framework. The narrator speaks at the beginning, he speaks at the end, and then everything between is something different.

And there's no other book like this in the Bible. The poetry in between chapters 3 through 41 are poetic, and a very specific kind of poetry, epic poetry. Epic poetry in almost any language is hexameter.

And you know, hex means six. And you have bicola here. A bicolon is a two-line chunk of poetry.

And Job threw out, with a couple of notable exceptions, you know, there's always artistic variation. There may be a little bit of corruption in the text. But basically, starting in chapter 3 and going for 40 chapters, you have this dramatic poetry, this epic poetry, in two-line chunks, each line having three beats.

A three-emphasis meter. So in each bicolon, you have six beats. And that's classic hexameter.

It's of interest to me. I've had to take classes and done a lot of analysis of poetry. And when you get into Hebrew or get into a foreign language, I like the simplicity of English language poetry when it rhymes at the end, you know.

Now, these are the laws of the navy. Unwritten and varied they be. And he who is wise will observe them, going down in his ship to the sea.

Now, think about that. This is your hexameter-type structure. It's got three beats to measure.

Now, these are the laws of the navy. Three beats. Unwritten and varied they be.

Three beats. He who is wise will observe them. Three beats.

Going down in his ship to the sea. Well, it's a lot easier in your own native language to detect that and to follow it. You go through the rhyme of the ancient mariner and some of these endless long poems and they just follow that all the way through.

Well, in Hebrew, A, our pronunciation is educated guesswork in Hebrew. And we don't always know, in fact, many times we do not know where the emphasis and where the accent fell in ancient Hebrew. And so trying to parse this out and discern the structure is a bit of a challenge.

And this is high-class Hebrew. Job is to the Old Testament what Luke is to the New. Luke has got the best classical Greek in the New Testament.

Job has got some of the loftiest Hebrew of the Old Testament. So it's unique in that sense. It is also unique because it is probably one of the least known accounts in terms of context.

Think about any other book of the Old Testament. We know about the books of Moses. Moses wrote them.

We know when his lifespan was. We can put that in historical context. You get to the time of David.

You get to the Chronicles. You get to the books of wisdom. Solomon wrote them.

The Proverbs. You get to the prophets. They have a context.

They've got a historical basis. Many times we've got an account. We know where Isaiah was.

We know where Elijah and Elisha were. Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, all of those guys. We can locate them within a radius of, say, 50 years, nearly all of them.

Job is much trickier to date and to place in a historic context. And so we'll talk about that a little bit here in a minute. The personnel, the cast of characters in the book of Job is kind of unique.

We have eight characters in the book. There are eight personages that you can identify without any difficulty. God, Satan, Job and his wife.

That gives you four. Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar and Elihu, the four friends. And you can see that they fall in about those groups.

God and Satan are from one realm. Job and his wife are from another realm. The four friends are from another realm.

So you've got a total of eight personages there. We have an interesting window into what has been called the heavenly conclave, the heavenly realm where Satan comes up and talks to God. God talks to Satan.

They have this exchange. How did this information filter down to the human author of Job? This is my question. Matthew and I can remember well.

Becca may remember. There's these great recordings that were done 40, 45 years ago, 50 years

ago where they dramatize stories of the Bible. And so the recording for Job, we had this record that had Job on it.

It was one of Matthew and my favorite ones. Got the introductory music that they, you know, the canned music they use for a lot of these. The music fades out and the guy says, And it came to pass that Satan and his angels held a conference.

And then they dramatized Satan down there making his speech to his fallen angels and getting irritated about Job. And then here's God and Satan having this dialogue. Satan is presented in Job in his classic biblical role of accuser.

He makes an accusation. But he is not the one who makes an issue out of Job. Satan shows up.

God says, Hey, Satan, what have you been up to? He says, I've been roaming around. God says, Well, while you were roaming around down there, did you see my servant Job? And as I've pointed out in the past, a lot of us went to church here in Dallas and there was a study done by the pastor at that time based on the book of Job and he titled the series, When Satan Calls Your Name. And I always felt like that was kind of unfortunate because it should have been called When God Calls Your Name because God singles Job out and brings him to Satan's attention and says, Well, what do you think about this? Let's talk about Job.

Let's try some stuff out on Job. I mean, this is at God's behest. It's not like Satan said, Lord, let me run something by you here.

I'd really like to pester one of your saints. So the book is unique in the sense that we have the duality of conversation in heaven and episodes on earth. So this is going to be an interesting study from many different perspectives.

We're going to learn something about God's plans and purposes, something about the interaction of certainly the fallen angels, Satan specifically. We're going to learn a little about Hebrew poetry because understanding that structure is going to give us insight into what is being said. Because this is a lengthy book, I do not plan to do a word-by-word exegesis or this study would be the last one that we ever undertake on Friday nights because we would be in it until the Lord comes back.

So we are going to, at the same time, try to not leave anything significant out. If you think anything has been left out, why, let me know before, in the middle, or after, and I'll make a note and try to cover it. But at the same time, we want to try to move rather briskly, considering the amount of material, so that we finish in a reasonable amount of time.

I say that only to say this. Part of what I hope to do is discern, for the benefit of all of us, what are the keys, what is the structure, what are the themes, what are the salient points, and with those keys, all of us individually can look at any of the material that we don't cover in detail and fit it into

a context and understand it and digest it, more or less, for ourselves. The last thing I'm going to say by way of introduction in terms of uniqueness is that the Book of Job has a reflection forward.

This is not my own idea. This is an unnamed man who was talking to Dwight L. Moody well over 100 years ago. If you know when Moody did his thing, the Moody Bible Institute named after him and so on.

But this story is recounted by Charles Feinberg. I'll just read this to you from Feinberg's own account. An Englishman once said to Moody, Did you ever notice this, that the Book of Job is the key to the whole Bible? No, said Moody.

I don't comprehend that. Job, the key to the whole Bible? How do you make that out? This unknown Englishman said something that Moody never forgot. He said, I divide Job into seven heads.

The first head is a perfect man, untried. That's what God said about Job. And that is Adam in Eden.

He was perfect when God put him there. The second head is tried by adversity. Job fell just as Adam fell in Eden.

The third head is the wisdom of the world. The world tried to restore Job. The three wise men came to help him.

That was the wisdom of the world centered in those three men. You cannot, he said, find any such eloquent language or wisdom anywhere in any part of the world as those three men displayed. But they did not know anything about grace and could not therefore help Job.

Then in the fourth place, in comes the days man, the redeemer. That is Christ. In the fifth place, God speaks.

And in the sixth, Job learns his lesson. And Job says, I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.

And then down came Job flat on the dunghill. The seventh head is this. God restores him.

Our last estate is better than our first. You can quibble with a few details in there. I don't think the three friends offer the wisdom of the world.

I think they offer the wisdom of the day. The wisdom that believers understood. But generally speaking, that is the sequence of events in Job.

And that is the broad outline of application that we are going to see as we go through these 40 odd chapters. That you start out with a righteous man. All is well.

And then there is this disruption. It is not a parable. It is not an exact analogy.

Job does not sin and fall from grace as Adam does. But the consequence and the progress is the same. And after wrestling with Job's condition for many chapters.

We suddenly find God intervening. And God revealing his purpose. And Job's acquiescence and acknowledgement.

And with that comes change of mind. And with that comes restoration and a double blessing. So it is an interesting thought.

It is an interesting perspective. And there have been other applications of the book of Job that we probably will not go into. It has been compared in great detail to the nation of Israel.

I may allude to that later on. But having pointed these things out. Let me start by beginning to answer some of the questions raised in this introduction.

Obviously Job is notable and is known and has the reputation as the sufferer. The theme of the book generally speaking is suffering. But that can be broken down into more parts.

The nature of suffering is such that you can't just say well the book is about suffering. And let's study Job and we'll learn all about suffering. There is the theme of the righteous man suffering.

There is the theme of God's purpose in suffering. His suffering takes a lot of different forms. Comes in a lot of different areas.

He has financial setback. He has emotional suffering. He has physical suffering.

He has spiritual suffering. And those aspects are explored as the dialogue progresses. Was this undeserved suffering? When you look at the proverbial wisdom of the Old Testament.

And I mean the book of Proverbs. There is the view, the commonly understood perception. That an outstanding and upright person will be blessed by God.

Job is by any definition upright. Even by God's definition. Have you seen my servant Job? He's upright.

He's righteous. And yet he is a supreme example of affliction. So this presents us with a little bit of a conundrum.

There is also the problem of attitude in suffering. We can talk about the categories of suffering. We can talk about God's purpose in suffering.

What about the person's response to suffering? Is it okay to question God during suffering? What is the difference between questioning God and renouncing God? A famous single quote from

Job's wife comes to mind. How much comprehension do we need of God's plan and purpose for our suffering? There is a difference, for example, between asking why and demanding that God answer why. Think about that.

It's one thing to ask God why a certain circumstance or event or form of suffering takes place. It is quite another to demand that God answer why. And you'll find, for example, in Job 13.22, Job treads very closely on the border of this.

He says to God, call and I will answer or let me speak and then you respond to me. In Job 19.7, he says, if I cry out concerning wrong, I am not heard. If I cry aloud, there is no justice.

To insist that God explain our suffering is inappropriate. To ask God why is completely appropriate. Jesus on the cross.

David in Psalm 21 before him. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou far from me? There is a difference between asking and demanding. The literary form of this book has been compared to a lawsuit, a trial case.

There are legal terms that are used in the book. Technical legal terms in Hebrew used by Job, his friends and God. It also has elements of a controversy dialogue, which is a classic form of literature in the ancient world that you'll find in Greek and in Latin.

It has elements of a lament. When you read some of Job's speeches, you'll find that it sounds very similar to the Psalms. Indeed, you can make a case that both Jeremiah and David allude to Job.

It's not quite a quote, but this helps us a little bit in dating the book to see that there are some ideas in the book of Job that seem to be alluded to by both David and later Jeremiah. It is in the lament sections. There is very rich vocabulary here.

Dozens of words in this book occurred nowhere else in the Old Testament. It becomes a challenge for translation. It also explains some of the transmission problems in the text.

We're going to see that there are some. But just as an example, how many words do we have in English for lion? You know, shaggy mane, big teeth, lion. Pretty much you've got the lion or the king of beasts.

We've got two terms. There are five different words in Job used for lions. Traps, snares, six different words in Job used for traps.

Six different words for darkness. Six different kinds, different qualities, different aspects of darkness. There are words that seem to partake of other languages besides Hebrew, such as Akkadian, Arabic, Aramaic, Sumerian, Ugaritic.

One of the great things is that at the end of the 19th century, they found some Ugaritic literature, poetic, which sheds great light on the book of Job. For example, the Amarna tablets, tell El Amarna in 1887, and the Ras Shamra texts. By the way, I know this sounds kind of technical, but these are two of the most famous biblically related archaeological finds in history.

You really need to know what these are. The tell El Amarna tablets in Egypt and the Ras Shamra texts were found by Schaeffer in 1929. These texts, the reason they're important, they date from the middle of the second millennium BC.

This is around the time of Moses. This is the time of the Exodus. That's how old these are.

And we have so few pieces of extra biblical literature from that time. They are critically important for understanding the books of Moses and Job. There's a lot at Ras Shamra that reflects the ancient Canaanite civilization, its society, its commerce, its political institutions, its religion.

Before Ras Shamra, all we knew about these was second and third hand from late Greek sources. Quotes of quotes of quotes. All of these Ugaritic studies throw great light on Hebrew lexicography and so on.

The authorship of the book of Job, as I said earlier, is unknown. Suggestions include Job himself, Elihu, the fourth friend, Moses, Solomon, Hezekiah, Isaiah, someone after the Babylonian exile like Ezra, or an anonymous author just 200 years before Christ. The book is commonly dated anywhere from the 7th century to the 2nd century BC, even by relatively conservative scholars such as Metzger.

Some argue that Solomon could be the author because he was so interested in poetic literature, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Proverbs, and because of the similarities that you find between some of the Proverbs and some of the things said in Job. I think we could easily account for those in other ways. But what are the clues to authorship? Well, the details of these lengthy conversations, the meticulous nature would indicate that whoever wrote it was an eyewitness.

Whoever put this stuff together seems to have been there. This kind of favors Elihu or Job. The time of writing also gives us a clue, or the time of the story gives us a clue as to who might have written it.

So, when did Job live? These two questions are sort of interrelated, the authorship or the origin of the book and when Job lived. Well, one of the major clues, and I'll be honest with you, I hadn't really thought about this much until I was preparing for this study, but Job apparently lived to the age of over 200. Because Job lived 140 years after these events.

At the end of the book it says he lived another 140 years and begat 7 more sons and 3 more daughters. Well, if he was, say, 70 at the time of the events of chapter 1 and 2, then he lived to about 210 years of age. That lifespan puts him squarely in the age of the patriarchs.

Abraham, Isaac, Jacob. So, that's a clue. Often, if Job himself wrote this account, he certainly had plenty of time to do it.

And it's not unusual for people back in those days to write about themselves in the third person. Deuteronomy chapters 1 through 33 was written by Moses, and yet it says he talks about himself in the third person throughout that section. The lifespan of Abraham was 175.

Tera, his father, died at the age of 205. Isaac lived 180 years. Jacob died at the age of 147.

I have suggested in the past that the time frame for Job is after the descent of Jacob and his sons down to Egypt. In the days of Joseph and before the Israelites became enslaved in Egypt, which set up the exodus and the time of Moses. So, basically, between Joseph and Moses is my suggestion.

I have several reasons for that. I think that Job is an Israelite. I can't prove that, but I think he is.

I think his level of knowledge and such would be strange for a Gentile. I think his three friends are also, I think all five of them, Job and his four friends, would be descendants of Jacob. We know that Jacob's sons and grandsons were highly, highly prolific in that period measured in hundreds of years between Joseph and Moses.

We also know that there was traffic and there was travel between Goshen and the land of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We know this from episodes that took place in terms of sons of Judah dying up in the land even though they were all dwelling down in Goshen and so on. We know that Uz, the land where Job lives, is up in the realm of the land.

It's on the border of Edom. And so, many of these other characteristics, Job's wealth is not reckoned in terms of shekels. It's reckoned in terms of livestock.

This is typical of the patriarchal age. For example, Abraham's wealth is given to us in Genesis 12, 16 in terms of livestock. Same thing in chapter 13, verse 2 of Genesis.

Abraham was very rich in livestock as well as silver and gold. Same thing with Jacob in Genesis. Another critical clue to the time of Job is the mention of the raiding parties who come down and take his stuff.

We have the Sabians and the Chaldeans mentioned in Job 115 and 117. We know from other sources that these were nomadic peoples in Abraham's time, but they were not nomads in later days. They clearly seemed to be nomadic raiders in the time of Job.

So, this puts it in the Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and I would argue, slightly after Jacob, time frame. By the way, I don't think Job's long lifespan, which being longer than Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob, knocks him back into the days of Terah, for example, because Job is richly blessed and unusually blessed. He could have had twice the lifespan.

He's doubled in everything else, and so he could easily have had an extended lifespan that would make him a little abnormal for his day. There is a Hebrew word used in chapter 42 that is unique. It's used of the silver that is brought to Job by his brothers and sisters and his acquaintances who came and ate food with him in his house and consoled him and comforted him for his adversity.

There's a Hebrew word there, Kasetah, translated piece of silver. It's only used two other places in the Bible. One of those is in Genesis 33, 19, when Jacob buys a piece of land from Shechem for 100 pieces of silver.

It's the same word, so once again, this is sort of a provenance kind of thing. That word is used one other place, Joshua 24, where he's talking about the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt. They buried at Shechem in the plot of ground, and then it quotes that early reference in Genesis 33.

So this, once again, puts us in the time of Jacob for Job. Another interesting fact, Job's daughters were heirs of his estate along with their brothers, the three daughters. This was not possible under the Mosaic law.

If the brothers were still living, you find this in Numbers chapter 27. So we know from this and numerous other clues that Job predates, Moses predates the law at Sinai, the sacrificial system and so on. There's no mention in Job anywhere of any Mosaic institutions, no Levitical priesthood, no Mosaic law, no tabernacle, no religious days, no feasts, clearly pre-Mosaic in that sense.

The name of God used in the book of Job is predominantly Shaddai. Shaddai is used 31 times in the book of Job. The entire rest of the Old Testament, you only find Shaddai 17 times.

But in Job, it's 31 times. And this is the name by which God was known to the patriarchs. For example, Genesis 17, 1, when the Lord appears to Abram and introduces himself and says, I am El Shaddai, I am Almighty God.

Also, you'll note the reference back to this in Exodus chapter 6 in verse 3. God says, I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, El Shaddai. But by my name Lord, I was not known to them. By my name Yahweh, I was not known to them.

Well, Shaddai is what he's known by to Job. So this is another good clue. Many other personal place names.

Sheba was a grandson of Abraham, Genesis 25, 3. The Sabians are related to Sheba. Tima, Eliphaz the Timanite. Tima was a grandson of Abraham, Genesis 25, 15.

It's a location in Arabia. Eliphaz is the name of one of the sons of Esau. And of course, Uz is on the border of Edom.

So that would put him after the time of Esau perhaps, or at least it's certainly significant that Esau has a son named Eliphaz and one of Job's friends is named Eliphaz. They're not thought to be the same person. Uz itself, Abraham has a nephew named Uz in Genesis 22, 21.

So all of these things conspire together, though each of these is just a matchstick. But when you pile them all together, they make a little raft on which you can float the idea that Job is in the later time of the patriarchs. And once again, my conclusion is he is between Joseph and Moses earlier in that bracket before the time of the slavery of the Israelites at a time when they could still travel freely.

Job by the name is a common name in the second millennium B.C. There's a 19th century B.C. prince in Egypt named Job. The Tel El Amarna letters that I mentioned earlier have individuals named Job in them, as well as the Ugaritic Ras Shama text. We have Job all over the place.

So the last thing I want to give you by way of introduction here is structure. We've talked about the fact that the book is unique. We've talked about its characteristics, its place.

By the way, getting back to authorship and the time of the events being in the early patriarchal age, this also argues strongly in my mind for Mosaic authorship for Job because when you look at the detail of these conversations, this is not likely to have all been carried by oral transmission. I think this was probably set down in an ancient script, maybe Hebrew, maybe something else. I would argue Hebrew.

But I think this was another piece of literature that Moses could easily have collected from the library in Egypt during his time there as prince, during the time when he was investigating his roots, collecting the information for the book of Genesis from cuneiform tablets that have been handed down probably from before the time of the flood, across the flood with Noah, down through Shem to Abram, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, easily deposited in the libraries of Egypt by Joseph to be accessed by another prince in Egypt quite a while later and transcribed, brought out of Egypt in the Exodus. And I think that's by far the most symmetrical explanation. So my hypothesis is Moses.

He best fits the evidence. Although I think that is the form of the book that we now have. I think he transcribed it from something earlier, something decades older.

And the original account could easily have been set down, as I said, by either Job or Eliphaz, somebody who was there at the time. A man of Job's notable wealth and prosperity would be expected to have some secretaries, some scribes, someone who kept accounts of important visits, important visitors, set down contracts and so on, could easily have been set down by one of them. Okay, so now back to structure.

This is important. If you're not taking notes, you at least need notes of this or at least try to remember it. There are three major dialogue cycles in the book.

Job is going to speak, and then each of the three friends is going to speak, and this is going to repeat three times. It's not important that I give you the chapter numbers and all that right now, but we're going to have the prologue. We're going to have the introduction.

Here's the setting and the backdrop. God and Satan have a conversation. We're introduced to the existence of Job and his wealth and so on.

The suffering is going to happen. He's going to lose his stuff. He's going to be sitting there scraping himself with a pot shirt.

The three friends are going to show up, sit there for a week and not say anything because they see that his grief is very great, and then you begin the poetic section of the book, and in that poetic section, there are three major cycles. Job will speak. Each of the three friends will speak, and after each friend speaks, Job is going to have a response.

So Job speaks. Friend speaks. Job speaks.

Second friend speaks. Job speaks. Third friend speaks.

Job speaks, and that completes the cycle. Then Job is going to speak again. First friend speaks.

Job responds. Second friend speaks. Job responds.

Third friend speaks. Job responds. Then you have the third cycle.

Job makes another big speech, and then we have a little bit of trouble because that great pattern that is so clear gets disrupted a bit, and we're going to look at that with some interest when we get to chapter 25 and 26 and 27. Then after those three dialogue cycles, you have Elihu, and he's going to speak, and he's going to get a big chunk all by himself. He's going to go from chapter 32 through chapter 37.

Then God speaks. Then we have the epilogue. Okay? That's the broad structure.

I think you can remember that. Three introductions. Three big dialogue cycles.

Elihu speaks. God speaks. Epilogue.

Got it? Okay. We'll pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're going to dive in.