**Survey Old Testament**

**Book of Job**

As you study the Book of Job, keep these facts in mind: (1) This is an Oriental book, filled with the thoughts and expressions of Eastern peoples. (2) This is a poetical book (except for chaps. 1–2 and 42:7–17), and Hebrew poetry is very unlike Western poetry. (3) This book wrestles with a difficult problem, the presence of suffering in a world where God rules.

**The Man**

Job was a real man in history. Ezekiel names him (14:14–20) and so does James (5:11). Job was a godly man, a wealthy man, and a man with sincere concern for the needs of others.

**Job’s Friends**

Four other men are involved in this drama, all of them friends of Job. Keep in mind that the events in this book cover several months (7:3) and that friends and neighbors discussed Job’s situation (6:15; 12:4; 16:10; 17:1–9). Eliphaz from Teman was the first speaker, and he based all his ideas on a “spiritual experience” he had one night (4:12–16). Bildad knew some “wise sayings” and tried to build a case on them. Zophar was very dogmatic and certain that he knew more about God than anyone else. At the end (chaps. 32–37), a new voice appeared, that of the younger man Elihu, who waited until his elders had spoken before advancing his ideas. While the three older men insisted that God always blessed the righteous and judged the wicked, Elihu said that God sometimes chastened the righteous in His own will. He asked Job to submit to God and trust Him, but his attitude was still that of a judge and a critic.

**The Blessing of Endurance**

The Book of Job does not give a “definite answer” to the problem of why the righteous suffer. James 5:11 commends Job for his endurance, which literally means faithfulness under trial. Perhaps this is the greatest lesson of the book: that God is sovereign and does not have to explain His ways to us. God works out His purposes (Rom. 8:28), and this is all that matters. When trials come, we should not ask, “How can I get out of this?” but “Lord, what can I get out of this?”

**Job’s 1-3  Prosperity (1:1–5)**

1. In every way, Job was a rich man. He was rich in character, for he was “perfect and upright.” He feared God, with a humble trust, and he separated himself from evil. He was also rich in his family, having seven sons and three daughters. As for Job’s wife, she did not seem to have the faith and wisdom that Job possessed (see 2:9–10), although we can understand that she would rather see her husband die than having to endure such pain. In the end, however, God proved that she was wrong. Job was rich in possessions, “a very great household.” His livestock numbered in the thousands. Certainly God had blessed Job, and Job was not hesitant to praise God for all He had done. Job did not permit his money and possessions to take the place of God.

**Job’s Adversity (1:6-2:13).**

1. Satan has access to heaven and must “report” to God. See Rev. 12:7–12. In heaven, Satan accuses the saints before God; see Zech. 3. Thank God for our Advocate in heaven, Jesus Christ the Savior (1 John 2:1–2)! Unknown to Job, God and Satan discussed his case. Satan admitted that he had been going up and down the earth (see 1 Peter 5:8–9), and God pointed to Job of what a godly man ought to be. But immediately Satan accused Job of being a hypocrite. “The only reason Job is obedient is because he is so rich. Take away his wealth and he will curse you to your face!”
2. Note that the believers are “hedged about” by the Lord and that Satan cannot touch them without God’s express permission. See Luke 22:31–34. Satan is not equal to God either in wisdom or in power. Satan is not all-powerful, for he is but a created being limited in power. Satan is not everywhere-present; he is limited to one place at one time. And Satan is not all-knowing; for had he known how this situation would turn out, he would never have done it.
3. The moment he had the divine permission, Satan attacked Job’s personal possessions, and in a brief time, Job was left with nothing. Note that Satan used common things to attack Job—enemy armies, fire, and a strong wind. Job’s friends thought these destructive forces came from God when they really came from Satan. In fact, one man called the fire (possibly lightning) “the fire of God” (1:16). How did Job respond? “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord”.

**Satan’s second accusation and attack (2:1–13).**

1. What a rebuke to Satan! “Still he holds fast to his integrity,” God reminded Satan (2:3). But Satan had another lie on his tongue: “Let me touch his body and give him pain, and you will see how faithful he is.” God permitted this, but limited Satan again, for Satan cannot go beyond God’s will. What Job’s “sore boils” were, we do not know. At any rate, he was filled with pain, his appearance was horrible (19:13–20), and there seemed to be no hope. His wife could not bear to see him suffer, and in a moment of unbelief, she suggested he curse God and let God kill him (vv. 9–10). Job told her, you are speaking foolishly. We have all done this when we don’t understand what is happening.
2. Then Job’s three friends made an appointment to come to comfort him, and they sat in sympathetic silence for a week after weeping with him. It is possible that Satan had his hand even in the words and deeds of Job’s wife and his three “friends.” Satan used Peter. Certainly he could use even Job’s well-meaning friends.

**Job’s Perplexity (3)**

1. Do not misunderstand this chapter; Job did not curse God as Satan predicted he would do (1:11; 2:5) or as his wife suggested he do (2:9). What Job did curse was his birthday; he wished he had never been born. He felt he would have been better off to have died at birth than to live and endure such grief. “Surely I was born for something better than this!”
2. Verses 25–26 indicate that Job had often thought about trials and feared he might have to face them. He was a prosperous man, and he wondered what he would do if he lost his wealth and health. Please remember that Job did not curse God; nowhere in the book does Job deny the Lord or question His holiness or His power.
3. For a godly man to wish he were dead should not be a surprise to us. Moses asked God to take his life (Num. 11:10–15), and Elijah prayed to die after his escape from Jezebel (1 Kings 19). Please note in chapter 3 that Job asks “Why?” five times (vv. 11–12, 23). “Why?” is an easy question to ask, but it is not always a question that God will answer.
4. When you become perplexed over the trials of life, remember that God is still on the throne. See Job 23:10 for an expression of Job’s faith: “But he knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold” (nkjv). Job was going through the furnace. But when one of God’s children is in the furnace, God is there with him (Isa. 43:1–2 and Dan. 3:25).

**Job’s Accusers Job 4–37**

1. Job’s three friends came to comfort him, but they ended up criticizing him! Each of them used the same argument in one way or another: (1) God blesses the righteous and afflicts the wicked; (2) God has afflicted Job; (3) therefore, Job must be wicked. Of course, their thinking seemed logical, but it was not spiritual.
2. In his first speech, Eliphaz argues that Job is a sinner (4:7–11). He bases his thinking on a special vision he once experienced (4:12–21), so we might say that Eliphaz argues from personal experience—the hard “facts of life.” Bildad picks up the argument in 8:1–7 and very bluntly states that God does not do things unjustly. In 8:8–10, Bildad argues from tradition, and then quotes a series of “old sayings” to support his argument. Zophar rebukes Job in chapter 11 and tells him he needs to repent and get right with God!  All three “friends” make the same mistakes: (1) they fail to enter into Job’s sorrows and sympathize with him; (2) they have a rigid concept of God and His works, one that is not fully true; and (3) they are too dogmatic and proud to listen to Job and honestly examine their own beliefs.
3. Jesus never sinned, yet He suffered more than any person! Neither Job nor his friends knew about the conference in heaven, that God was using Job before Satan and the angels to prove that people will trust God even when they do not understand what God is doing. The friends called Job a “hypocrite” (8:13; 15:34; 20:5; 34:30); God called him “a perfect and an upright man” (1:8; 2:3). In 2:3 God makes it clear that He had no cause for afflicting Job, that Job was not a hypocrite or a sinner. This is why God rejected the speech of Elihu (38:1–2) and the speeches of the three men (42:7).

**Job’s Arguments**

1. After each man spoke, Job replied, except in the case of Elihu, where God Himself stepped in to answer. Job’s argument went something like this: (1) I believe God is just and powerful as you do; (2) But I am not a hypocrite—I know of no sin between me and God; (3) I would argue my case with God but I cannot find Him; (4) Nevertheless, I will trust Him, for He will vindicate me either in this life or in the life to come. It took a great deal of faith for Job to argue this way in the light of his circumstances. No wonder James 5:11 points to the endurance of Job.

**Job’s Appeals**

1. The most important verses in this section are those that state Job’s heart appeals to God and to his friends. His friends did not show love and understanding; to them Job was a theological problem, not a suffering saint (see John 9:1–3). In chapter 6 Job states he has lost his taste for life (vv. 6–7) and wants to die (vv. 8–13). He compares his friends to a brook that dries up just when thirsty travelers need water (vv. 14–20).
2. He appeals for a chance to confront God. In chapter 9 Job complains that he has no way to present his case before God, because he cannot find Him. Note in v. 33 his appeal for a mediator to stand between him and God. “How should a man ever plead his case with God?” Thank God for the Mediator, Jesus Christ, who represents us before God! See 1 Tim. 2:5; 1 John 2:1–2; and Zech. 3. See Job 16:19–22; 23:3.
3. He appeals to his basic integrity. In each of his speeches, Job denies that he is secretly a sinner. At the end of the book, when God reveals Himself to Job, the man does bow in dust and ashes and confess his worthlessness (40:3–5; 42:1–6); but this was not a confession of sins. Rather, it was a humbling of himself before God as he realized his own ignorance and worthlessness in the presence of the Almighty. God never does accuse Job of sin.

**Job 38–42**

1. We now reach the climax of the book and God Himself steps on the scene! In 9:35, 13:22, and 31:35–37, Job had challenged God to appear and talk with him face to face, and now God does just that. The first thing God does is to sweep aside the vain ideas of Elihu, who had darkened God’s purposes and brought no light into the situation at all. Now God proceeds to deal with his servant Job in a personal way.
2. God asks Job a series of simple questions about the universe and its operation. How foolish to think that a mere human being could measure God’s Creation! Only God can govern this universe and make everything work.
3. “Now,” says God, “you have reproved me and argued with me. Give me your answer!” There is only one answer Job can give (40:3–5): “I am vile; I have talked too much about things I do not understand. I will say nothing more.”
4. The result? Job humbles himself and repents (42:1–6). God does not charge Job with the sins that his friends accused him of committing, but God does charge him with not seeing himself in the light of the greatness and majesty of God. Job has met God personally, and this makes all his sufferings worthwhile.

**God Honors Job (42:7–14)**

1. The first thing God does is rebuke the friends. He commands the friends to offer burnt offerings, and He instructs Job to pray for them. It must have taken grace for Job to pray for men who had treated him so severely, but he was a man of God and he obeyed the Lord. God turned Job’s captivity when he prayed not for himself, but for his friends. God healed his body.
2. After rebuking Job’s friends, God then restored Job’s fortunes. Note that four times in vv. 7–8 God calls him “my servant Job.” God gave Job twice what he had before.
3. Job lived for another 140 years.  Of course, not every saint who suffers in the will of God (1 Peter 3:17) is going to be so honored in this life. Even Satan must bow to God’s control, for God always writes the last chapter. Christians who suffer during this present age may not be rewarded here, but they will be rewarded hereafter. The secret of Job’s life was endurance (James 5:11);  he trusted God in spite of Satan, circumstances, friends, or loved ones.
4. Key verse of the book: Job 19:25–27 (NLT) “But as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and he will stand upon the earth at last. 26 And after my body has decayed, yet in my body I will see God! 27 I will see him for myself. Yes, I will see him with my own eyes. I am overwhelmed at the thought!