

JOB - A STUDY GUIDE

THE CENTRAL QUESTION:

What does this book/story say to us about God?

This question may be broken down further as follows:

- a. Why did God do it/allow it?
 - b. Why did He record it for our study?
-

1. Who do you think wrote the book of Job? Do you think Job ever knew that a book of the Bible was written about him? Did Job ever find out why all those things happened to him? Did he ever read or learn about the information in Job 1 & 2? Where did the information in those two chapters come from? What about the surprise ending in Job 42:7-10? Would you have trouble understanding the book if you had only the dialogue and the ending (Job 42) and didn't know about Job 1 & 2?
2. What are we supposed to learn from the book of Job? Is Job unique in any way? What about the conflict that we see in Job 1 & 2? Is it true that God holds councils at which Satan actually comes to accuse us? Who are the "sons of God" or "heavenly beings" referred to in Job 1:6 and 2:1? If Adam had not sinned, would he have been one of these "sons of God?" (see Luke 3:38) Are there other places in the Bible where we read about similar councils or conflicts? (see Daniel 7:9-13; Ephesians 6:12; what about 1 Kings 22:19-23 and 2 Chronicles 18:18-22?) In such situations, who is always the one accusing us? (see Revelation 12:10; Zechariah 3:1-5)
3. If Job confessed with sacrifices just in case his children had done something wrong (Job 1:4,5), why didn't he confess and offer a sacrifice for himself? Was he really sure that he had not done anything wrong? Can we be sure?
4. Is it right for "a perfect and upright man" (Job 1 & 2) to make the statements that Job made in his first speech? (Job 3) Is it true as Eliphaz the Temanite says that "God does not trust his heavenly servants; he finds fault even with his angels?" (Job 4:18, *GNB*) Who made this statement? Is it true that "mankind heads for sin and misery as predictably as flames shoot upwards from a fire?" (Job 5:7, *TLB*) Is it true about God that "though he wounds, he binds and heals again?" (Job 5:18, *TLB*)
5. What was Job's greatest trial? Was it the loss of his children, his wealth, and his health? (this all happened in a few verses--Job 1:13-19; 2:7) Or was it the accusations (bad theology) of his friends? These friends spoke with great authority, but they were wrong! (Job 34:34-36, *TLB*; 37:20, *GNB*; Contrast Job 42:7-9) In the last days, God's people will go through the "time of trouble." (Matthew 24:21-22) We often suggest that the greatest trial will be the loss of our material possessions, our friends, and the physical suffering we will go through, but if Job is a "type" of these people, could our greatest trial be, like Job's, the statements of our well-meaning, but misinformed friends?
6. How do you think a scholar would go about trying to date the book of Job? What evidence from the book might he consider? Conservative scholars have believed that Moses was the author of the book of Job. If so, why isn't Job mentioned somewhere in the books of Moses (Genesis through Deuteronomy)? Is it easier to understand how Moses could be such a friend of God and speak so well of Him, if he knew about the story of Job? On the other hand, knowing about Job why would Moses write such things as "if you're good, you'll be blessed, but if you're bad, you'll be cursed?" (Deuteronomy 8:18-20; 27:1-28:68)
7. In Esther and Job, God seems to end up saying something good about Himself, but what about the people involved? Was Job used just as a pawn? What about Job's children? (Job 1:4,5,18,19)
8. Was Job wrong when he said, "The Lord gave, and now the Lord has taken away?" (Job 1:21, *GNB*; Compare Job 1:12; 2:1-10; 2 Samuel 24:1 in contrast with 1 Chronicles 21:1) Isn't it clear from the earlier verses that Satan was the one who "took away?" Was this a serious error on Job's part? (Job 1:22) Or was he speaking as they understood things in those days? Was Naomi (Mara) right that the

Lord had dealt very bitterly with her? (Ruth 1:20,21) When someone has a horrible accident we sometimes say, "It must have been God's will." Are death and sickness ever God's will?

9. Would it be correct to say that the death of Job's first children and the loss of all his wealth was God's will? In what sense? Or was this demonstrating a great truth in the great controversy? Could anything happen if God did not permit it? If I eat lots of candy and get holes in my teeth, would it be correct to say that it is God's will, because He didn't stop me? What about smoking and lung cancer, or drunk driving and fatal accidents? If a person neglects to study all year and then fails, is that God's responsibility? This world is full of diseases, disasters and drunk drivers. Is that God's fault?
10. Why do the righteous suffer, and the wicked prosper? We like to tell stories suggesting that if we faithfully pay our tithe, and obey God, God will protect us. But what about Job? Job trusted God even when all the evidence seemed to be against him, and even Job's wife said "curse God and die!" (Job 2:9) Which shows greater faith: 1. You have nothing to eat, you pray, and miraculously food is provided (such stories make great kid's stories), or 2. You have nothing to eat, you pray, and no food is provided, but you still trust God (like Job)? The story of Job is for grownups!
11. Would you agree that Job was "perfect" and that he had not sinned after reading the speeches recorded in Job 3 and 13? What did God mean when He said Job was "perfect"? Did anyone disagree? Why? Look at Job 4:17; 22:19 and Psalms 58:10. Compare Job 31:29. Which represents God's attitude?
12. What is the central question in Job? Would it be, "And if God didn't do it, who did?" (Job 9:24, *GNB*)
13. On what basis do you think Job was able to say, "though he slay me, yet will I trust in Him?" (Job 13:15, *KJV*) Or should this be stated as a question, as in some versions, "should I trust Him, though he slay me?" (see *GNB*)
14. How do we relate these grand, universe-wide issues in Job with our day-by-day battles with evil? Should we daily ask God to look after us, or should we not bother God, and assume that whatever happens is according to His plan? Is God too busy to pay attention to our little day-by-day needs? See the life of Jesus: feeding Jairus' daughter (Luke 8:55); feeding the hungry (Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-14); healing the sick and casting out demons (John 5:1-17; 9:1-34, etc.); crying at Lazarus' funeral (John 11:35); and blessing the children, etc.! (Matthew 19:13-15; Luke 18:15-17)
15. Would it be safe to freely pick key texts from the book of Job? In what sense could such a book be "inspired?" If, as God Himself suggests, Job's three friends had not said what is right about Him (Job 42:7-10), how can we call their speeches "inspired?" Should we consider this book as being only partly "inspired"--that is, chapters one and two, Job's speeches, and God's speeches are "inspired", but the rest is not? What about some of the things that Job says in his depression? (Job 1:21; 6:4,13; 12:16-25; 16:6-14; 17:11-16)
16. Who understood God better, Elihu or Job? (Job 34:34-36, TLB; 37:20, *GNB*; 42:7,8) Do you sometimes feel like Elihu did when he said, "I won't ask to speak with God; why should I give him a chance to destroy me?" (Job 37:20, *GNB*)
17. If you were asked to summarize the real issues behind the rhetoric in the book of Job, what would you say? Was the real question about Job or about God? (Job 9:24) Was there any real difference of opinion over God's omnipotence or sovereignty? Do you think Job should have repented at the end? (Job 1:22; 2:10; 42:1-8) Did Satan agree with God's judgment of Job? Does he agree with God's judgment of us?

© Copyright 1998-2006, Kenneth Hart
khart@llu.edu