

JOB - A TEACHER'S 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 (chapter 42) and didn't know about chapters one and two?

The book of Job does not reveal who wrote it. He was a profound thinker dealing with some of the most troubling questions in human existence from a mature spiritual perspective. He was very eloquent in communicating his message. The book of Job is one of the most beautifully expressed books in the entire Old Testament. The author knew about "wisdom" (*hokmah*, Heb.) literature, about nature and a lot about foreign cultures.

Two questions must be asked when trying to date the book of Job: 1) when did the events of the book take place? and 2) when was it written down?

It seems very likely that Job lived during the patriarchal period, probably about the time of Abraham (2100-1900 BC). This thinking is based on the following arguments:

- There is no reference to Israelite history or Biblical law.
- Job apparently lived for at least 200 years (See Job 42:16). This is consistent with others who lived in Abraham's time.
- Job acted as priest for his own family which was prohibited later by Mosaic Law (Job 1:5; Numbers 3:5-13) and there is no mention of priesthood or sanctuary.
- Job's wealth was measured in terms of livestock (See Job 1:3; and 42:12). Compare Abraham and Jacob (Genesis 12:16; 13:2; 30:43; 32:5).
- The Sabeans and Chaldeans are portrayed as nomadic raiders (1:15,17). In later years they became settled nations.
- The Hebrew word for *piece of silver* (*qesita*) in Job 42:11 is mentioned elsewhere only in transactions from the patriarchal age (See Genesis 33:19; Joshua 24:32). This was no small offering because 100 *qesitas* purchased a sizable piece of property for Jacob.
- In the poetic sections of Job there is a very strong preference for the use of *El Shaddai* instead of *Yahweh* as the name for God which was given to the children of Israel at the time of the exodus (see Exodus 3:14,15; 6:2).

Exodus 6:2,3: ²God spoke to Moses and said to him, "I am the Lord. ³I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as *El Shaddai*, but I did not make Myself known to them by My name *hwhy* [Yahweh]." (*Tanakh, the Holy Scriptures*)

Scholars disagree on when the book of Job was written down. Conservative Jewish and Christian scholars tend to believe it was written quite early. Others think that it was not written down until the days of Solomon or perhaps even later. Attempts have been made to date the book based on its language and vocabulary. But these have proven inconclusive because of dissimilarities to other examples of classical Hebrew.

"The possible allusion to Job in Qoheleth [Ecclesiastes] 6:10–11 may echo familiarity with the folktale, and the recently discovered Targum (Aramaic translation) of Job from Qumran, dating from

the 2d or 3d century B.C.E., suggests a considerably earlier date for the book of Job.” (*Anchor Bible Dictionary*)

Who was Job? “**Job** was a real person, as Ezekiel 14:14–20 and James 5:11 indicate. He was a native of the land of Uz (Job 1: 1, 19), which scholars have located either northeast of Palestine, near desert land, probably between the city of Damascus and the Euphrates River, or to the southeast, in the area of Edom. Job probably lived before or around the time of Abraham. (c. 2167–1992 B.C.) Some have suggested that Job was about 70 years old at the time of the events in Job (cf. 42:16). He was very wealthy (Job 1:3, 10); he and his sons were homeowners in a large city of the region (Job 1:4; 29:7); he was a respected and popular judge, and benefactor of his fellow citizens (29:7–25). He was a righteous man in God’s eyes (Job 1:1, 5, 8; 2:3; Ezek. 14:14–20; James 5:11). The events related in this book were initiated by God (Job 1:6–8), for God did not allow Job’s trials because of any sin in his life (2:3).” (*King James Version Study Bible*)

Where was Uz: “No one knows the exact location of Job’s homeland, the land of Uz (Job 1:1). However, the Bible states or suggests several things about Uz:

- It was located in the East (1:3). This probably means somewhere east of the Jordan River.
- Job’s friend Eliphaz came from Teman (Job 2:11), known to be in Edom (see Gen. 36:8; Jer. 49:20). Teman was the grandson of Esau (Gen. 36:11), and the region of Teman probably was named for him. It seems appropriate that Eliphaz was a Temanite, for apparently the Temanites had a reputation for wisdom (Jer. 49:7). “Temanite” could also refer to Tema in the Arabian Desert; compare Job 6:19.
- Uz was accessible to Sabean raiders (Job 1:15). The Sabeans were inhabitants of Sheba, probably located in the mountainous region of southwest Arabia (now Yemen).
- Uz was also accessible to Chaldean raiders (Job 1:17). Chaldea was the small territory of southern Babylon bordering the head of the Persian Gulf between the Arabian desert and the Euphrates delta.
- Jeremiah named Uz in a list of kingdoms and peoples including Judah, Egypt, Philistia, Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, Sidon, and others (Jer. 25:17–26).
- The Book of Lamentations seems to indicate that Edom and Uz were nearly the same (Lam. 4:21). The parallelism of the Hebrew poetry used provides perhaps the strongest indication that Edom and Uz were one and the same, or close to it.” (*Word In Life Study Bible*)

Ellen White:

“As year after year passed by, and left the servant of God [Moses] still in his humble position, it would have seemed to one of less faith than he, as if God had forgotten him; as if his ability and experience were to be lost to the world. But as he wandered with his silent flocks in solitary places, the abject condition of his people was ever before him. **He recounted all God’s dealings with the faithful in ages past, and his promises of future good**, and his soul went out toward God in behalf of his brethren in bondage, and his fervent prayers echoed amid the mountain caverns by day and by night. He was never weary of presenting before God the promises made to his people, and pleading with him for their deliverance.

“Those prayers were heard. Could his eyes have been opened, he would have seen the messengers of God, pure, holy angels, bending lovingly over him, shedding their light around him, and preparing to bear his petition to the throne of the Highest. The long years amid desert solitudes were not lost. **Not only was Moses gaining a preparation for the great work before him, but during this time, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he wrote the book of Genesis and also the book of Job, which would be read with the deepest interest by the people of God until the close of time.**” (ST Feb. 19, 1880; *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, 1140; see also *Education* 159).

Traditional Jewish sources also agree that Moses wrote the book of Job. However, it is not necessary that the original material in the book of Job, which may have been an oral tradition passed down from parent to child, to be in written form. Very little was written down in Job's day. People's minds were probably better, or at least less overloaded than ours and they remembered better.

It is possible that the original dialogues that form the central part of the book may have been written down before Job 1 & 2 and 42. But in any case, the book of Job now forms a very important complete book that tells us a great deal about God. Why do you suppose God gave us the book of Job? How many people down through the ages do you think were able to read and understand this book?

Considering the relationship that Job had with God as described in Job 29, don't you think that, after it was over, God hastened to tell Job about why all this had happened to him?

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)

Job is the only book in the Bible which clearly talks about the "behind-the-scenes" activities that took place in heaven as well as the events that took place here on planet earth. How frequently does God hold these councils in heaven? Do they often consider events taking place on planet earth?

Many Christians feel that God in His sovereignty determines how things are going to work out and what we do or say has little or no effect on Him. They feel that God is so far above us and that He has so many responsibilities that, other than providing the plan of salvation for us as a human race, God has little time to concern Himself with what happens to us. This idea is called God's sovereignty.

Job 1 & 2 suggest something quite different from that. In the setting of the great controversy, each of us ultimately makes a choice as to whose side we will be on. God was willing to come and die in order for us to be saved, and now He cares very much about the choices we make. Furthermore, our choices reflect back on God. He chooses to place Himself on trial before the universe to let each of us make up our own minds as to whether or not He can be trusted and whether or not He has won the great controversy. (See Romans 3:4)

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?

As you review Job's early arguments he in effect says that he may have done something wrong and he asks God's forgiveness. (Job 6:24; 10:2; 13:20-24) But later, he states clearly and repeatedly that he is not guilty of the really major sins that his enemies believe he has committed. (Job 23:7,12; 27:5) Job had a good relationship with God and he knew God as his friend. He trusted God to show him any sins that were in his life. These "friends" who accused him of things that he knew he had not committed couldn't shake his faith. At the end when God initially spoke out and seemed to be supporting what the friends had said, Job was ready to confess. But God finally ended the whole matter by confirming the truth about His friend Job, just as Job had spoken the truth about Him. (Job 42:7,8)

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*)

These are typical “poetic” statements that are characteristic of the “wisdom literature” found in the Bible. Job was in terrible distress and so he expresses himself as one who is in such distress. These are not intended to be statements of universal truth under all circumstances but rather correct expressions of Job’s feelings at the time. (Compare Job 9:23,24; Psalms 2:11,12; 58; 59; 77:10; See *Psalms Teacher’s Guide* #6)

For a discussion of Eliphaz’s statement see handout #17 - “*What Does It Say To You About God?*” pages 2,3. Notice that this statement was repeated several times in the book: Job 4:12-21; 15:14-16; 25:4-6. Furthermore, Elihu suggests that it is God who speaks in dreams and visions. (Job 33:15) But God said back in the beginning of the book that Job was an upright and a faithful man. Satan wants us to believe that it is impossible for humans to be good here on this earth. (Job 4:17-21) He believes that he is the “Lord” of this earth and he controls everything and everyone who lives here.

Worse than that, Satan accuses even God of not being an accurate judge of human character. Satan wants us to believe that God made a mistake when He threw Satan and his angels out of heaven, and he is hoping through this conflict over Job to prove God wrong. As far as Satan is concerned this would in effect win the great controversy for his side.

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?

Often the worst trials come from unexpected sources. Did Job have any idea of the accusations he would face when his “friends” arrived and sat down to mourn his condition for a full seven days? (Job 2:13) Our friends get the closest to us and thus can wound the greatest. It is harder many times to deal with the errors of those who profess to believe what we believe and who think that we should believe just like they do, than to deal with those whom we know are of different churches or religions. When we expect to be different from someone it is not such a shock when they speak out in opposition to what we believe. But when we expect people to believe like we do and they in turn expect us to believe like they do, it can be a real problem when there is sincere disagreement.

It must have been a real trial for Job to hear his friends suggesting that even his children got what they deserved! (See *GNB* on Job 8:4; compare 11:6; 34:11; 36:17; contrast 42:8) Like Job, we must learn to put our trust in God alone.

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)

Dating is an important matter for books of the Bible. It helps us to understand the context in which the events of a given book took place. It also raises other questions such as the ones posed above! For some of the reasons why it is dated as it is see #1 above. Perhaps Moses didn’t mention Job because he realized how few of those who were following him through the desert would understand the larger issues portrayed in that book. The words of Deuteronomy form a sort of prediction of what would happen to the children of Israel in the next 800 years. It was not so much a threat by God, as a warning. Unfortunately, they didn’t seem to get the message and proceeded to fulfill what had been predicted about them with very little evidence that they had comprehended what God was saying at all.

As one reads through the entire Bible there are many places where the views of Job's friends are supported. Why didn't these Bible writers realize the lesson of Job? Even the Pharisees and Sadducees in Jesus' day believed that the good were always blessed and the bad were always punished so that if one was rich it was a proof that he/she was good and vice versa. This was their ultimate "proof" for believing that Jesus was a sinner and they were righteous!

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)

Many times it may seem that things that happen, even apparently at God's hands are not fair. This is one of Satan's favorites arguments against God. No one expects Satan to be fair, but as he continues to lie, cheat, misrepresent, deceive and confuse he jumps at any opportunity to accuse God of being "unfair". (See handout #17 - "**What Does It Say To You About God?**") Nothing about Satan's accusations against God or God's true people are fair.

Despite all of this, God and His true people live and act in whatever way they can to correctly represent the truth. Doing so will eventually cause the truth to come out and it will be seen that Satan is the cause of all the evil and unfairness in this universe. If we can help God in any way to win the cosmic conflict by correctly representing Him here on planet earth and thus help Him to "checkmate" the Devil, we should feel honored even if for the time being it may seem very unfair, even like we are nothing but pawns. (Compare Job 1,2)

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?

This is an issue that we will face and discuss many times in Scripture. (Compare 1 Chronicles 10:13,14 with 1 Chronicles 10:1-7 and 1 Samuel 31:1-13) To the Hebrews, Yahweh was the only God (Deuteronomy 6:4) and they rejected the common idea of those around them that there were "good gods" and "evil gods" and when something bad happened to you it was because you had offended one of the "good gods" or had not appeased one of the "evil gods" adequately. But this left them with the problem of trying to explain the source of all evil. This is discussed considerably in the book of Job and elsewhere.

Ultimately the Jews and even conservative Christians today believe that God is in control and He could prevent all evil if He chose to. Thus in a sense He is responsible. But we must remember that God, more than anything else wants us to be free and that includes the ability to make choices, good choices and bad choices, and to reap the results of those choices. God cannot forcibly overrule the effects of evil without fundamentally altering the nature of the universe that He has created. (See handout #13 on "**Love**") So in the broadest sense, God did "give" and God did "take away" but not in some arbitrary way for no reason at all. God realized that Job was someone who could play an important role in helping God Himself clarify for the onlooking universe some of the issues and win the great controversy. God certainly needs all the correct representation He can get here on planet earth! If so many of us hadn't misrepresented God so seriously God wouldn't have had to make such an example of Job.

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?

There are several main reasons why “bad things happen to good people”. Let us review some of the most important of them: **1)** Even good people here on earth are continually making mistakes or bad choices and reaping the consequences of those mistakes. In order for sin to be seen as the evil that it is, it must be demonstrated that evil has bad consequences. **2)** Just living on planet earth is “hazardous to one’s health”! Often we don’t even know that what we are doing is dangerous until it is too late. **3)** Living surrounded by evil often results in the evil deeds of others killing innocent “bystanders”. This is one of the important things that needs to be demonstrated about evil and is part of what makes evil the bad thing it is! **4)** Probably very rarely, some good person, like Job suffers something very bad happening to him because God is allowing it as a part of some necessary demonstration for the benefit of the entire onlooking universe in the larger setting of the great controversy. In the hereafter, we will be able to see why each of these things happened. It will turn out to be a wonderful revelation of the love of our heavenly Father.

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 stories for kids), 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!

This is a thought question. Are we prepared to trust God on the basis of a careful evaluation of the total evidence even when things don’t seem to be going too well? Or are we just “rice Christians”? We need to make our decisions about God based on the long history of the cosmic conflict and not just on what seems to be happening to us at a given moment.

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 22:19 and Psalms 58:10. Compare Job 31:29. Which represents God’s attitude?

God is not trying to suggest that Job had never sinned. Every human being has sinned. (See 1 Kings 8:46; 2 Chronicles 6:36; Psalms 5:9; 14:1-3; 53:1-3; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Isaiah 59:7,8; Romans 3:23) Being a righteous person does not stop one from having feelings, or being really upset by what appears to be a terrible injustice. In fact, righteous people may be more aware of injustice since they are often trying their best to promote justice for all. It would be helpful to know more about Job’s background, but that will have to wait until we are in the kingdom. What God was able to say about Job was that he would not be turned away from his loyalty to God by a temporary, although terrible, reversal in his fortunes. Job had a settled trust in God that stood firm through everything and Job was right. Notice that it was God who apparently initiated this whole affair. Satan was desperate to prove God wrong about anything. God knew that something important could be demonstrated in this exchange and He was willing to let it take place. Notice the difference between Job’s attitude on certain matters and that of Job’s friends:

Job 22:19: (Eliphaz) “Good people are glad and the innocent laugh when they see the wicked punished.” (Compare Psalms 58:10) *GNB*

Job 9:23,24: (Job-at the bottom of his depression) “When an innocent person suddenly dies, God laughs.²⁴ God gave the world to the wicked. He made all the judges blind. And if God didn’t do it, who did?” *GNB*

Job 31:29,30: (Job-after thinking things through) “I have never been glad when my enemies suffered, or pleased when they met with disaster;³⁰ I never sinned by praying for their death.” *GNB*

God welcomes our questions. Perhaps this is one of the most important things that we can learn from the book of Job. This should be quite clear from the concluding comments in Job 42:7,8. What God wants most is friends who are willing even to suffer to speak the truth about God, whom they regard as their greatest Friend.

12. What is the central question in Job? Would it be, “Would Job worship you if he got nothing out of it?” (Job 1:9, *GNB*) or “And if God didn’t do it, who did?” (Job 9:24, *GNB*)

There are very clearly at least two major themes in the book of Job. Between Job and his friends in their dialogues it would appear that the question was “Why do bad things happen to good people?” Job wanted to ask God why all this was happening to him and his friends were sure that they knew more about Job than even Job appeared to know! They were certain that God punishes only the wicked. The righteous may temporarily suffer setbacks and the wicked may temporarily appear to prosper, but before long it was clear in their minds that each gets what he deserves. (See *GNB* on Job 8:4; compare 11:6; 34:11; 36:17; contrast 42:8) They had a “gospel” of “health and wealth” and they wanted everyone to know that they were prosperous and thus on God’s “good” list! By contrast, they had never even imagined anyone so suddenly beset by so many terrible tragedies as Job and to their minds this could only mean one thing: Job had committed some terrible sin.

But behind the rhetoric of Job’s friends was the Devil himself! Remember what God had already said about Job. (See handout #17 on Job 1:1,6; 2:1) Satan thought that this was his chance for the first time to prove God wrong. If he could just get Job to sin in some obvious way, it would raise significant questions about God’s ability to judge character. Satan felt that, given his track record with human beings, surely it would be possible for him to catch Job in some kind of sin. So Satan begins his side of the “dialogue” involving Job’s friends by appearing in a dream at night to support the view of God that he had already imposed on Job’s friends and we might add, many other people down through history. Satan wanted them (and us) to believe that it is impossible for a human being to be “perfect and upright”. Satan suggested that God doesn’t even trust the angels (like Satan and his followers), so how could He trust a feeble human being like Job. We are so weak and insignificant in God’s eyes according to Satan that God would crush us in the dust like an insect without even noticing it. Such an insignificant creature could never play a key role in the great controversy between God and Satan!

By contrast, God had clearly stated already what He thought of Job, and His judgment had always been right before. God considered Job a friend and Job felt that God was a friend. You don’t talk about friends as insects to be crushed in the dust! Furthermore, God knew that Job, despite all his problems, was going to prove to be a wonderful example of the kind of person who bases his decisions about life and God on the total amount of evidence that is available (no doubt including many conversations that they had had together in the past) and not just on the fact that he is depressed, terrorized and hurting at this particular moment. Why are we so often ready to throw out everything when something happens to us that we are not happy about? Is it right for Christians to expect that nothing bad could ever happen to them? What do we expect to take place in the time of trouble?

If Satan can get us to give up our faith by inflicting us with some kind of sickness, tragedy or other evil, then in effect we have allowed him to control us and we are not God’s true friends. God’s true friends will remain faithful no matter what happens to them, like Job did.

So the most important question in the book of Job is: “Can God be trusted to judge angels and humans”? Can He be trusted to stick by us through good times and bad times no matter what happens? Do we really believe that God will not allow us to be tempted more than we can bear? (See 1 Corinthians 10:13) Does God sometimes allow “bad” things to happen to us for our own good?

Satan by contrast wants us to believe that God’s ways are simple to understand. If you are good, God will bless you. And if God blesses you, you will no doubt be wealthy. If you are not good, God cannot bless you and you will clearly be poor. So in this view, you can tell who the good people are and who the bad people are just by looking!

Notice this summary of Satan’s and Job’s friends’ theology:

A Comparison of Satan’s Theology with that of Job’s friends

Satan	Job's Friends
IF Job is blessed by God, THEN he will be faithful.	IF Job is faithful, THEN he will be blessed.
IF Job is not blessed by God, THEN he will be unfaithful. (Satan accused God of bribing His followers.)	IF Job is unfaithful, THEN he will be punished.

Is there any real difference between these two views? Job's friends did an excellent job of representing the Devil's viewpoints. And the Devil got some very good ambassadors to try to push his views on Job.

In conclusion then, we can say that there are many issues discussed in Job, but the most important one by far is the question of whether or not God's treatment of people is "fair" in the largest possible context, and whether or not He is a correct Judge of character. In the final judgment we want to be sure that God makes no mistakes, or else the whole great controversy could start all over again! The book of Job shows us that God judges rightly.

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*)?

One possibility, which should be given real consideration is that Job knew God on a personal basis. God came down and talked with Abraham, as well as appearing to him in visions. (See Genesis 17,18) Is there any reason to believe that He could not have communicated with Job in the same ways? Job's commentary from the book seems to suggest that he knew God very well (See Job 29) in a day when there were no churches, no pastors, no Bible study groups, and no Bibles! Not a single one of the books of the Bible had been written yet as far as we can determine.

Under those circumstances how did Job come to know God? They must have had some sort of working relationship. It was probably on the basis of this relationship that Job could speak so confidently about God. What other possibilities can you think of? (See Job 29:1-5)

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)

The Bible is full of evidence that God cares for even the tiniest creatures. He notices even when a sparrow falls. (Matthew 10:29) God apparently has the capacity to concern Himself with all of the grand universe-wide issues and at the same time care for the smallest needs of His tiniest creatures. He doesn't just provide for us in a broad, general sense but Jesus demonstrated a very personal interest in the lives of all He came in contact with. (See references in the question above)

But each of us is also a part of the greater universe-wide controversy that is going on. The battles in this cosmic conflict are being fought in the minds and hearts of human beings. More than this, God, Himself, chooses to place His reputation and government on trial to be judged by His creatures.

Romans 3:4:

4 mh; genoito: ginesqw de; olqeo;" ajlhqh!" , pa" de; ahqrwpo" yeusth" , kaqw;" gegraptai:
opw" ah dikaiqh' ejh toi" logoi" sou

kai;nikhsei" ej tw/krinesqai se. (*Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament*)

...“That Thou mayest be declared righteous in Thy words, and mayest overcome in Thy being judged.” (*Young’s Literal*)

...“That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.” (*KJV*)

...“That You may be justified in Your words, And may overcome when You are judged.” (*NKJV*)

...“That thou mayest be justified in thy words, and prevail when thou art judged.” (*RSV*)

...“So that you may be justified in your words, and prevail in your judging.” (*NRSV*)

...“So that thou shouldest be justified in thy words, and shouldest overcome when thou art in judgment.” (*Darby*)

...“That Thou mightest be justified in Thy words, And mightest prevail when Thou art judged.” (*NASB*)

...“That thou mightest be justified in thy words, And mightest prevail when thou comest into judgment.” (*ASV*)

... “Your words will be proven true, and in court you will win your case.” (*CEV*)

...“So you hand down justice when you speak, and you win your case in court.” (*God’s Word*)

...“You must be shown to be right when you speak; you must win your case when you are being tried.” (*GNB*)

...“so that you, God, may be proved right in your words and win the verdict when you are put on trial.” (*Jewish New Testament*)

...“That God’s words will always prove true and right, no matter who questions them.” (*TLB*)

...“Your words stand fast and true; Rejection doesn’t faze you.” (*The Message*)

...“That you may be justified in your words, and conquer when you are judged.” (*NAB-RC*)

...“That You may be justified in Your words, And prevail when You are judged.” (*NASB, 1995*)

...“So you will be shown to be right when you speak, and you will win your case.” (*NCV*)

...“So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge.” (*NIV*)

...“That you may show your saving justice when you pass sentence and your victory may appear when you give judgement.” (*New Jerusalem-RC*)

...“He will be proved right in what he says, and he will win his case in court.” (*New Living*)

...“That you may be shown to be right in what you say, and win your case when you go into court.” (*Goodspeed*)

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)

It should be clear from what we have seen so far that much of what the three friends of Job said came from ideas that are not in accordance with God’s ideas. Some of it seems to have come directly from the Devil. In such a situation we must be very careful in using this material, no matter

how familiar it sounds or how correct it seems, as if it were inspired of God. God, Himself concludes at the end that the three friends needed to repent because they had not spoken the truth about Him as Job had.

“Inspiration” under such circumstances takes on new meanings. We cannot just assume that everything we read in Scripture is directly from the mouth of God! The book of Job is “inspired” in the sense that God helped the story to be recorded correctly and the reporting can be relied upon. That does not mean that every word is truthful and should be regarded as a “thus saith the Lord”! But we should remember that we have run across other examples of such a thing happening in Scripture. Would we quote the words of the serpent in the garden of Eden as if they were the words of God? (See Genesis 3:1-4) If so, we have God contradicting Himself! The fact that something is in Scripture does not guarantee that it is from God or even that it is the truth!

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*)

Elihu did not have a friendly relationship with God! He respected God, but he was afraid of Him. Is that what God wants most of all?

Job, on the other hand, asked lots of questions of God, even when God didn’t appear to be listening. Job had come to know God well enough so that he was comfortable asking questions. God’s best friends in the Bible often seem to be the ones that ask questions. God wants understanding friendship, not just grudging servanthood. In order to have willing, understanding friendship, one must seek to know the one with whom one wish to be friends.

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?

See the handout #17 ***“If God Didn’t Do It, Who Did?”***

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