



**WHEN GOOD PEOPLE SUFFER**  
**Studies in the Book of Job**  
**Lesson 4**

**HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BOOK OF JOB**

The story is told of a mad woman who used to roam the streets of Athens crying, “O that we could burn down Heaven and put out the flames of Hell, then we would see who really loves God.” That is what the book of Job is all about – whether anyone can love God without expecting to get anything out of it. The book affirms that God is in control even when he appears not to be and that we can trust God even when we have no explanation as to what is happening to us.

**I. THE GENRE OF JOB**

**A. Several Types of Biblical Material Are Found in Job:**

**1. Laments**

Job repeatedly bewailed what had befallen him Job 3:1-6, 6:27, 10:1-2.

**2. Hymns of praise**

Job often praised God for his power and righteousness Job 5:9-16 26:1-14

**3. Proverbs**

Pithy statements of wisdom and metaphor appear in Job 5:2; 6:5-6.

**4. Prophetic speech**

The friends sometimes claimed to have had prophetic experiences, and they preached as the prophets did Job 4:12-14; 11:13-20; 32:8.

**5. Wisdom poems**

Job has several lengthy poems on the value of wisdom and right behavior. Compare Job 28 to Proverbs 30:2-4 and Job 8:11-22 to Psalm 1.

**6. Numeric sayings**

Compare Job 5:19 with Proverbs 30:21.

**7. Reflective questioning**

Job sometimes bluntly challenges conventional wisdom. Compare Job 21:17-19 to Ecclesiastes 9:2-3.

**8. Apocalyptic passages**

Job has some features in common with books like Daniel and Revelation.  
(Dockery, Holman Bible Handbook)

**B. Characteristics of the Book of Job**

**1. Job shares some characteristics with Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon.**

**2. Highly poetic and metaphorical.**

**3. Deals with mature reflection on issues of everyday living.**

**4. In contrast to Proverbs, but like Ecclesiastes, Job must be read in its entirety to understand its message; single verses often contradict the overall message of the book.**

**5. The theological stance of Job counterbalances, even challenges, some perspectives of Proverbs.**

**6. Typical of wisdom thinking, Job views the world from the perspective of human need and concern rather than God's requirements.**

## II. THE PROBLEMS OF JOB

### A. Job's Suffering Brought About Two Problems

1. **The age old problem is how can a God who is both powerful and good allow human suffering?**
2. **The second relates to the question of retribution.**

Job's friends argued that "the punishment must fit the crime." Therefore since Job's suffering and losses were great, he must be guilty of great iniquity.

However, it is testified by God that Job was righteous, before, during and after his ordeal (1:8; 2:3; and 42:7 and 8); and his three friends, unlike Job, did not speak right things about God. Job 42:7 and 8

### B. His Friends

#### 1. The friend's accusations

His three friends used every trick in their repertoire to wear him down to their point of view - flattery (4:3-4), misapplication of Scripture (4:7-9), claims to spiritual revelation (4:12-16), false accusation (11.3) and even misquoting Job's words ("*For thou hast said, My doctrine is pure, [true] and I am clean in your eyes.*" [false] (11:4)) and many other approaches.

#### 2. God's evaluation of the three friends. Job 42:7-9

God tells the friends they have not spoken the truth about Him as has Job (Job 42:7). Job's questions directly to God and speculations concerning God were more honest than the friends' defense of God which ignored Job's questions and the realities of life.

God instructs the friends to offer a sacrifice and instructs Job to pray for his friends - perhaps God is seeking to bring reconciliation between Job and the friends. Job 42:8.

### C. Elihu

#### 1. What did Elihu contribute?

Much in his own eyes. This is what one would expect from one who is young enough to know all the answers. Job 32:17-19!

#### 2. Summary of comments made by Elihu.

- God speaks through dreams and pain (33:14-33) - Job should listen.
- God cannot do wrong so Job must be wrong in his life and in his theology (34:10-37).
- One cannot hurt or help God; one can only hurt or help fellow humans (35:5-8) - God is above all.
- God does restore the righteous and judge the wicked but in his own good time (36:5-33).
- God is all-powerful (37:1-24) - who can question Him?

#### 3. Positive Evaluation of Elihu

The speeches form a transition between Job's final speech and God's speeches. As a literary device Elihu acts as a dramatic pause, creating suspense in the mind of the reader. His speeches serve to mitigate the shock of God's sudden appearance in Job 38.

Elihu also effectively turns the attention of the reader to the issue of divine omnipotence. Elihu is a champion of God's sovereignty, power and control of all things. As such, God cannot be accused of injustice. This is much of the theme of God's speeches that follow.

Elihu describes the proper response to suffering. Because suffering is sometimes punitive and sometimes instructive, the proper response to that suffering is submission. (Job's arrogance and resentfulness border on insubordination against God and require repentance.)

The Elihu speeches point out the ultimate need for an intercessor, a point that was not lost to Job either. The human and the divine are impossibly separated. Only an intercessor can bridge that gap, an intercessor that can relate to both the human and the divine. Samuel Terrien called this "the necessity of a Christ." Elihu helps the reader to see this need by emphasizing the need for an intercessor.

#### 4. Negative evaluation of Elihu

But how do his words square with what God said about Job?

Elihu said:

*What man is like Job, Who drinks scorn like water, Who goes in company with the workers of iniquity, And walks with wicked men? (Job 34:7- 8);*

*For he adds rebellion to his sin; He claps his hands among us, and multiplies his words against God." (Job 34:37).*

*But you are filled with the judgment due the wicked; Judgment and justice take hold of you. Because there is wrath, beware lest He take you away with one blow; For a large ransom would not help you avoid it.*

*Will your riches, Or all the mighty forces, Keep you from distress? Do not desire the night, When people are cut off in their place.*

*Take heed, do not turn to iniquity, For you have chosen this rather than affliction. (Job 36:17-21).*

Clearly Elihu falsely accuses Job, and so should be classed with the adversaries (Hebrew: Satan = adversary).

All parties ignore his contribution, and he was not included when the other friends were granted repentance (42:8-9) - possibly because his blasphemous claims disqualified him:

*Truly I am as your spokesman before God; I also have been formed out of clay. Job 33:6.*

*Bear with me a little, and I will show you that there are yet words to speak on God's behalf. Job 36:2.*

#### 5. Summary of Job's relationship to the friends

The friends and Elihu were unable and/or unwilling to enter into Job's suffering and be empathetic with him.

Job had deep needs which he powerfully expressed:

*"I want to die." (6:8-9)*

*"Leave me alone, God, and let me have some peace." (7:19)*

*"I need a friend" (6:15-17)*

*"Look at me." (6:28)*

*"Why was I born?" (3:3-19; 10:18-19)*

*"I am broken." (17:1)*

*"Why doesn't what I was taught work?" (21:17-34)*

Job struggles alone when his friends should have been there for and with him. *"The child who defined 'sympathy' as 'your pain in my heart' knew more about giving comfort than did these three."*

- Wiersbe, Warren W. "Job." In The Bible Exposition Commentary/Wisdom and Poetry

### III. GOD'S SPEECHES

*Following the discourses of Job's friends God spoke to Job. He told Job to "gird up his loins like a man and I will ask you, and you will instruct Me!" (Job 38.3). God answered Job by a series of humbling questions. He asked "where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?" (Job 38.4), "have you understood the expanse of the earth?" (Job 38.18), and "can you bind the chains of the Pleiades or loose the cords of Orion?" (Job 38.31). These questions demonstrated the majesty, power, and knowledge of God. Compared to God, man is puny, weak, and ignorant. Job's response to God indicates that he has abandoned any self-conceit, indignation, or concept of himself as victim. His response is full surrender: "Behold, I am insignificant; what can I reply to Thee? I lay my hand on my mouth" (Job 40.4). Job went on to say, "I know that Thou canst do all things and that no purpose of Thine 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 thee and do Thou instruct me.' I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees Thee; therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42.2-6).*

*Following Job's acknowledgement, God vindicated Job to his friends and doubled all that he had before.*

- Don Samdahl- <http://www.doctrine.org/job.html>

The speeches are strange unless you look at the whole book. As one writer says, there is:

*-No mention of suffering in Yahweh's speeches. He seems to simply ignore the very reason for Job's outburst against Him.*

*-No reference to the exchange between Satan and Yahweh in the prologue. Yahweh never suggests to Job that the entire event was a test.*

*-No statement concerning Job's faith questions and growth, i.e. afterlife, a redeemer, an umpire, etc.*

*-No answer to the problem of suffering. Yahweh does not mention suffering, or why Job was suffering.*

*-The speeches at 1<sup>st</sup> appear to be completely irrelevant to the remainder of the Book of Job. Yahweh seems to ignore all of the major issues of Job. Why? (In the end, Job and the reader find that all that really matters is, after all, God. All of the other issues are minor aberrations. When God appears, He is all that matters.)*

*- [http://www.hgst.edu/Faculty\\_Staff\\_Pictures/Pitts/website/Lecture%20NOTES-WISDOM%20JOB.HTM](http://www.hgst.edu/Faculty_Staff_Pictures/Pitts/website/Lecture%20NOTES-WISDOM%20JOB.HTM)*

#### A. God Is the Yahweh of the Bible

Though the text uses Yahweh and Elohim (In the KJV and NKJV the words are translated as "LORD" and "GOD" for Yahweh and "God" for Elohim) interchangeably-

bly, the writer wants us to know that the One involved in Job's life and sufferings is the same One who revealed His name to Moses as "Yahweh." It is the name used in the covenant relationship of Israel with God.

#### **B. God's First Speech Job 38:2-40:2**

- 1. Praises the mysteries of creation - how it began and how it keeps going.**
- 2. Emphasizes Job's lack of knowledge - God knows much more than Job ever can know.**

#### **C. God's Second Speech Job 40:6-41:34**

- 1. Indirectly acknowledges Job's complaint and details the difficulty of ruling the powerful forces in the world.**
- 2. Uses the great beasts, Behemoth (a huge land beast) and Leviathan (a huge sea beast) to illustrate the powers at work in the world.**
  - a. Identification of Behemoth**

In the book of Job the Bible talks about two of the most fearsome and magnificent creatures that God made. The word "Behemoth" is used to describe the largest of the animals God made.

The word "Behemoth" means "Giant, kingly beast." Some say that the Behemoth was a hippopotamus and that Leviathan was a crocodile. It is doubtful if this identification would be made at all if it were not for most Christians being brain-washed with evolutionary ideas that can not tolerate the idea of dinosaurs being made along with man. There is nothing in scripture to suggest an image of a hippopotamus or crocodile in Job 40 and 41.

Behemoth is clearly what we would call today a "dinosaur."

The word "Behemoth" is not a direct translation; it is a transliteration which means that the original Hebrew letters were substituted with the equivalent English letters to enable us to pronounce it. The translation of many animal names from Hebrew was quite easy. Scholars could look at the physical descriptions and apply the appropriate English name. But when the translators came to the animal called "Behemoth" (described in Job chapter 40), they did not know what animal it was because no living animal fit that description. So in the English Bible, they kept this animal's original Hebrew name.

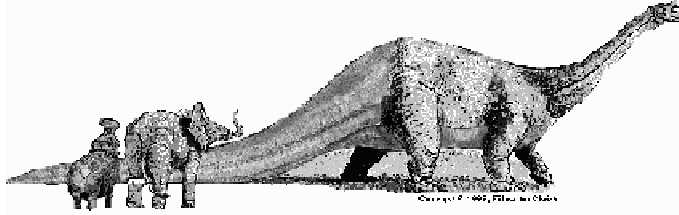
The obvious conclusion is that the Behemoth was either an unknown animal or an animal that had gone extinct. But it did not live millions of years ago, because Job saw one of these animals with his own eyes. God was not showing Job a vision. The Behemoth was created "with" man (Job 40:15). This enormous creature lived at the same time, and in the same region as Job.

As noted above, some commentators have suggested that the Behemoth could be a hippo or an elephant. But both of these suggestions ignore the physical description of the Behemoth given in the Bible. Hippos and elephants have very short tails. The Behemoth described in the Bible had a tail so long and so strong that God compared it to a cedar tree. The Behemoth's tail was as long as and as strong as the trunk of a tree. Yet it could easily bend like one of its flexible branches.

Cedar trees were one of the largest and most spectacular trees in the ancient world.

The fact that the tail is singled out in the description is important in identifying the animal God is talking about. The tails of dinosaurs are the longest tails in the animal kingdom.

The entire description given in these verses fit certain types of dinosaurs very well. Note verse 17 *"He moveth his tail like a cedar."*



There is no empirical evidence to support the belief that dinosaurs lived millions of years ago. In fact, the physical evidence contradicts this very idea. Dinosaur bones are NOT carbon dated. They are "assigned" an age based on how old someone thinks they are, based upon the geologic column.

Some think this could not be a dinosaur because of the King James rendering of Job 40:16 as "Navel." Dinosaurs laid eggs and did not have navels. The comments of Albert Barnes on (Job 40:16) are appropriate:

*The word here rendered navel means properly firm, hard, tough, and in the plural form, which occurs here, means the firm, or tough parts of the belly. It is not used to denote the navel in any place in the Bible, and should not have been rendered so here (1949, 2:248).*

#### **b. Identification of Leviathan**

*...Here are some reasons why Leviathan never was nor ever will be a crocodile.*

*One, "Behold, your expectation is false; will you be laid low [cast down, KJV; overwhelmed, NKJV] even at the sight of him?" (Job 41:9, NASB). Does a crocodile have that effect on a person? Does the very sight of a crocodile make us cast down?*

*Two, "When he raises himself up the mighty are afraid; because of his crashings they are beside themselves" (Job 41:25). How high does a crocodile rise? Can we describe a crocodile as one that rises and frightens the mighty with his "crashings?" If a crocodile could make crashings, would it crash enough to make the mighty beside themselves or bewildered (NASB)?*

*Three, "His undersides are like sharp potsherds; He spreads pointed marks in the mire" (Job 41:30). We see men wrestle alligators and crocodiles all the time. When they turn crocodiles over and expose their "undersides," do we see sharp potsherds? Is it not rather smooth? When a crocodile goes through mire, does it leave pointed marks? Only if someone drug it upside down! What is it in Job 41 that makes anyone think a crocodile is being discussed?*

*Four, "He makes the deep boil like a pot; He makes the sea like a pot of ointment. He leaves a shining wake be-*

*hind him; one would think the deep had white hair" (Job 41:31, 32). Have you ever seen a crocodile go out into the deep blue sea and make it boil? Would his wake make you think the deep has white hair? Again, we must answer in the negative.*

*Five, "Out of his mouth go burning lights; sparks of fire shoot out. Smoke goes out of his nostrils, as from a boiling pot and burning rushes. His breath kindles coals and a flame goes out of his mouth" (Job 41:19-21). Perhaps this is one reason why people are apprehensive to embrace Leviathan being literal. But again, why would Behemoth be literal and Leviathan figurative? There is presently living in our world a unique beetle called the bombardier beetle which could have a similar mechanism to that of the Leviathan. On video I watched this little 1/2 inch beetle defend itself by toasting a toad's taste buds! Hence he lives up to his name "BOMBARDIER BEETLE." In speaking about the Bombardier beetle's 212° noxious gas blast, Duane T. Gish, Ph.D. writes: "The chemicals and catalysts react to form another chemical, called quinone, which is very irritating. All of this happens extremely quickly in the bombardier beetle's combustion tubes....Scientists using special high-speed cameras have recorded both audible pops and puffs of smoke when the bombardier beetle sprays. They have also discovered that some species emit sprays in violent pulses at the rate of 500 per second" - Dinosaurs By Design, p. 83.*

*The point is easily understood. If a present day 1/2 inch beetle can protect itself with such a display of force, imagine what a several ton dinosaur could do with a similar mechanism. No wonder Jehovah says of this mighty and terrifying creature, "On earth there is nothing like him, which is made without fear. He beholds every high thing; he is king over all the children of pride" (Job 41:33-34). Leviathan is also mentioned outside of Job, showing that he was alive and well during the prophets:*

*"You broke the heads of Leviathan in pieces, and gave him as food to the people inhabiting the wilderness" (Ps. 74:14).*

*"This great and wide sea, in which are innumerable teeming things, living things both small and great. There the ships sail about; there is that Leviathan which you have made to play there" (Ps. 104:25-26).*

*"In that day the Lord with His severe sword, great and strong, will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan that twisted serpent; and He will slay the reptile that is in the sea" (Isa. 27:1).*

*- Stephen J. Wallace,*

*[http://www.biblebanner.com/ga\\_art/dayage/levithan.htm](http://www.biblebanner.com/ga_art/dayage/levithan.htm)*

### **c. Why does God say so much about these beasts?**

Behemoth and Leviathan are saved for the encore: they are considered

the best example of the ways of God. The implication is that only their creator can bring a sword (successfully) against them: Job cannot even judge beasts, how dare he judge God?

- 3. The existence of questions and powers that are not understood do not imply that God is absent.**

#### **IV. JOB'S RESPONSES JOB 40:3-5, 42:1-6**

God and His purposes cannot be condensed into an all-encompassing, infallible theological system. God cannot be boxed in. For God to be truly God, His people will have to recognize their limited understanding of Him and His ways, and will have to leave a place for mystery in God (while still seeking to penetrate that mystery).

- A. Job Acknowledged God's Power Which He Never Doubted in the First Place (Job 42:1)**
- B. Job Had No Real Answer From God's Speeches But Was Content With God's Presence (Job 42:5)**
- C. Job Repents "*in dust and ashes*" (Job 42:6)**

#### **V. KEY VERSES IN JOB**

- ***Job 1:1 "In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil."***
- ***Job 1:9 "...does Job fear God for nothing?"***
- ***Job 1:12 "...only do not lay a hand on his person...."***
- ***Job 2:6 "Behold He is in your hand, but spare his life."***
- ***Job 1:21 "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised."***
- ***Job 5:17-18 "Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects; Therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty. For He bruises, but He binds up; He wounds, but His hands make whole."***
- ***Job 11:14-20 "If iniquity were in your hand, and you put it far away, And would not let wickedness dwell in your tents; Then surely you could lift up your face without spot; Yes, you could be steadfast, and not fear; Because you would forget your misery, And remember it as waters that have passed away, and your life would be brighter than noonday. Though you were dark, you would be like the morning. And you would be secure, because there is hope; Yes, you would dig around you, and take your rest in safety. You would also lie down, and no one would make you afraid; Yes, many would court your favor. But the eyes of the wicked will fail, And they shall not escape, And their hope - loss of life!"***
- ***Job 13:15 "Though He slay me, Yet will I trust Him..."***

- **Job 19:23-27** *“Oh, that my words were written! Oh, that they were inscribed in a book! That they were engraved on a rock with an iron pen and lead, for ever! For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself, And my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!”*
- **Job 27:1-4** *“Moreover Job continued his discourse, and said: ‘As God lives, who has taken away my justice, And the Almighty, who has made my soul bitter, as long as my breath is in me, and the breath of God in my nostrils, my lips will not speak wickedness, Nor my tongue utter deceit.’”*
- **Job 28:28** *“And to man He said, ‘Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, And to depart from evil is understanding.’”*
- **Job 38:1-2** *“Then the LORD answered Job out of the storm. He said, ‘Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge?’”*
- **Job 38:7** *“When the morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy.”*
- **Job 42:5-6** *“My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.”*

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Read Lesson 4 and underline what verse(s) you think are the climax of the book.  
Read Job 32–42 and answer the following questions:

1. What did Elihu reason about the others words? (32:2)
2. In chapter 33 list the ways Elihu magnifies himself.
3. According to Elihu, Job is like the wicked (34:7-8, 36). Why? What has Job done which is so reprehensible?
4. Do people have any power to manipulate God, according to Elihu? (35)
5. Four times in verse 36 Elihu says, “Behold.” What does he say about God after each “behold”?
6. In 36:27–37:24 Elihu focused on God in nature. Find the references to autumn conditions, winter and summer.
7. In 38–40, God speaks. Does He mention Job’s suffering?
8. How does God describe Behemoth? (40:15–24)
9. If you had to choose one point, what point do you think God is making to Job?
10. Job responds twice (40:3-5, 42:1-6). Does he admit having sinned and deserved punishment?
11. What happens to Job? To his friends? Is this happy ending appropriate, given the majestic vision God has provided in earlier chapters? Why does God shower special attention upon Job?