

Introduction

Job is mentioned 59 times in 53 Bible verses. Only one of those references is in the New Testament (James 5:11). Aside from the Book of Job itself, “Job” appears in Genesis 46:13 as a descendent of Issachar, but who is called “Jashub” in similar references in Numbers 26:24 and 1 Chronicles 7:1; the occurrence of “Job” in Genesis 46:13 is not a reference to the star character of the Book of Job. Translations other than the KJV or NKJV do not use the name “Job” in Genesis. 46:13. “Job” appears two more times in the Old Testament outside of the Book of Job. Both of those instances are in Ezekiel 14:14, 20.

Historical Character of the Book

“From the earliest of times the book of Job was accepted as a historical composition” (Cox 188). “The book commences in a style that conforms to other Old Testament narratives that are unquestionably historical. ... ‘There was a man in the land of Uz...’” (Jackson 9). In addition, Job is named along with other real-life Bible characters—Noah and Daniel (Ezekiel 14:14, 20), which strongly implies that Job was a real-life Bible character, too. “If it is admitted that Noah was a real individual and that there really was a man Daniel, then none should try to argue that Job was a fictionalized character” (Cox 189). Besides the Book of Ezekiel, the New Testament Book of James likewise cites Job with no less indication that he was a real-life Bible character (James 5:11). Three Bible books, then, present Job as a real person, and therefore, as an historical figure—Job, Ezekiel and James.

The Bible books of Jeremiah (25:20) and Lamentations (4:21) concur with the Book of Job (1:1) that “the land of Uz” was a real, geographical location—even if we are not certain of the location of its ruins today. The location of Uz has been suggested to be between Palestine and Arabia, north of Edom to the Euphrates River. Real people live in real places; Job lived in Uz.

Tradition assigns the home of Job to a region east of the Sea of Galilee, noted for its fertility of soil and large production of grain. This area was once thickly populated. It is now dotted with the ruins of more than three hundred cities. (DeHoff 9)

Extra-biblical literature from about 4,000 years ago mentioned our Job as well (Jackson 10), further attesting to the historical man. The Book of Job is an historical narrative. It is **not** figurative literature with symbolic, fictionalize characters presenting some kind of spiritualized message in an elaborate, lengthy parable.

Type of Literature

“The book of Job is a historical poem based on an event that actually occurred” (DeHoff 10). Sometimes the Book of Job is cited as one of the books of history, whereas usually it is viewed as part of the collection of poetry in the Old Testament. Job is both historical and written in poetical form.

Date of the Book

The Bible supplies glimpses of patriarchal times preceding the inauguration of Judaism. “There is no hint of Hebrew race, culture or religion” (Waddey 84). The Book of Job fits into this time period before the giving of the Law of Moses and the establishment of the nation of Israel. Hence, the Book of Job provides some insight into patriarchal times.

The historical events of the book are quite obviously from the patriarchal age (i.e., between the creation and the beginning of the Mosaic economy) as the following factors

reveal: (1) There are no allusions to the Law of Moses in the book. (2) Job functions as a priest in offering sacrifices for his family (1:5). (3) Job's longevity is typical of the patriarchs (42:16). (4) The use of the term *kesitah*, translated "piece of money" (42:11), is elsewhere used only of patriarchal times (cf. Genesis 33:19; Joshua 24:32). (Jackson 10)

Job's gift of an inheritance to his daughters among their brothers (42:15) adds another argument for the patriarchal period... In the case of Leah and Rachel (of that age) who had brothers (Gen. 31:1), the two claimed that they were being deprived of "any portion or inheritance" in their father's house (Gen. 31:14), as though it was a custom. Whereas, under the Mosaic law there was no provision for a daughter to claim an inheritance of her father's estate if he had no sons. Following Zelophehad's death, his five daughters were being deprived of their father's heritage. They brought the case before Moses and Eleazar on the ground that their father "had no son" (Num. 27:3-4); therefore, they had no brothers. The matter was settled by a word from Jehovah (vv. 6-11). The parallel between what Job did and the claim of Leah and Rachel versus the situation under Moses argues for the patriarchal period for Job. (Hailey 20)

The Book of Job appears to have been written during patriarchal times, making it as old or older than the writing of the first five books of the Old Testament by Moses. The Book of Job may be the oldest Bible book! However, other than assigning the date of the book to patriarchal times, a more precise date for its production cannot be ascertained. That extra-biblical literature refers to the Book of Job in about 2000 B.C. pushes the origin of the Book of Job and the unfolding of the events that it chronicles more than 500 years before the beginning of Judaism at Mt. Sinai (about 1400 B.C.). It seems that Job lived "about 1,800 years before Christ, and about 600 years after the deluge" (*Barnes' Notes*).

Authorship

The author of the Book of Job remains an unknown. Even if Job, the main character of the volume, penned it, we do not know any more about him than what is revealed in the Book of Job, Ezekiel and James. However, knowing the human penman is not as crucial as knowing whether the divine penman is responsible for it. For instance, the authorship of the Book of Hebrews is not known for sure, though many suspect that the apostle Paul may have written it. Yet, the Book of Hebrews is fully accepted for its rightful place among the other 65 books of the Bible. All Bible books have passed the tests of canonicity, including the books of Job and Hebrews.

Several thoughts among students of the Bible ascribe the authorship of Job to various ones, including Moses. "The numerous occurrences of the name [Yahweh]...indicate that a Jew wrote the book, for the name **Yahweh** would be out of place on the lips of an Edomite or other non-Jew" (Hailey 20).

Job—the Man

Job is an intriguing Bible character for many reasons. For one thing, he was a monogamist in a time and place when polygamy was popular (Waddey 84). As wealthy as he was, Job had the financial means to support many wives and subsequent offspring. However, Job practiced God's original plan for marriage—one woman and one man for life (Matthew 19:3-6).

What would anyone do with 3,000 camels in the ancient Middle East? Especially in desert regions of that part of the world, camel caravans (Waddey 85) carried goods across vast areas in more direct routes through inhospitable geography than was practical with other types of animals or other transportation methods afforded. Job was a major investor in caravan routes and international trade; he was the ancient counterpart of a modern-day, large-scale trucking company.

Job's 500 yoke (pairs) of oxen shows that he was heavily invested as well in farming. Oxen were instrumental anciently (and today, too, in developing countries) in plowing the ground and other agricultural activities. "Such a large number indicates a vast farming enterprise" (Waddey 85). The 500 "female donkeys" would have been used for transportation for a big family and large staff besides light,

local hauling. The 7,000 sheep provided wool and meat for market (Waddey 85). Job was a very successful and wealthy business man of the ancient world.

The *good life* that Job had been enjoying was exchanged nearly in an instant for a most miserable and painful existence. Men and women of lesser stamina have faltered and do break with God over far less turmoil in their lives. None of us can be sure exactly how we would react to tragedy in our lives before it visits us. First, he **and Mrs. Job** lost all that he possessed, and he possessed much. They suffered the loss of all ten children. “The loss of all of one’s offspring would be unbearable” (Waddey 87). Adding to the devastation of Job was the loss of encouragement and support by his wife, the abandonment of family and friends, and verbal and physical mistreatment by one and all. Then, there were the physical infirmities.

Whatever it was, it appears to have been incurable and characterized by: boils (2:7), itching (2:8), drastic change of appearance (2:12), difficulty eating (3:24), mental depression (3:25), worms and running sores (7:5), shortness of breath (9:18), darkness of eyes (16:16), odorous breath (19:17), loss of weight (19:20), corroding bones and gnawing pain (30:17), blackened skin and fever (30:30). (Jackson 22)

Canonicity

Canonicity “...is the measuring-rod...the testing rule, or critical standard, by which each book of the Bible must be tested before it may be admitted as a part of the Sacred Scriptures” (Miller 88). Tests of canonicity would include: (1) Does the book bear evidence of divine inspiration and authorship? For instance, Bible books do not conflict with each other, and they always represent truth on whatever subject they voice themselves, even if it conflicted with common human thought of the era. Each true Bible book fits intricately with every other Bible book to present an ongoing and consistent message from God—usually which message man would not have authored (e.g., the origin of humanity is closely related to rebellion against God and expulsion from the Garden of Eden; humans fictionalizing an origin story would not indict themselves thusly).

(2) Was the Bible book under consideration accepted by acknowledged, spirit filled prophets of God? The Book of Job is validated by Ezekiel (14:14, 20), Jeremiah (Lamentations 4:21) and James (5:11). In addition, at least the apostle Paul quoted from the Book of Job (Job 5:13; 1 Corinthians 3:19; Job 35:7; Romans 11:35).

(3) Is the writing genuine, traceable back to the time and to the writer to whom it is attributed? Even if the writer himself is not named or known, are there any geographical, topographical, historical, political or other errors that betray the book as not belonging in the time claimed for itself? Invariably, despite good research, historical fiction slips up in some detail to invalidate its assignment to the ancient age it professes.

(4) Is it true, an authentic record of facts and compatible with divine instructions and historical information presented in other, unquestioned Bible books? (5) Are there credible witnesses that testify to the divine origin of the Bible book—Jewish professors during the time of inspired prophets, the early church in apostolic times, ancient historians and antique Bible manuscripts and Bible translations?

Canonicity is a biblical subject, forasmuch as the Greek word *kanon*, meaning “rule” or standard of faith and practice or boundary, appears in 2 Corinthians 10:13, 15-16 and Galatians 6:16. To a large extent, the Bible makes its own determination or canonicity respecting which books belong in its collection; the Bible books over which there is no dispute provide the rule or canon (*kanon*) to rule on other contenders for inclusion between the covers sounding forth the words, “Holy Bible.” Generally, canonicity passes judgment on literature as to whether is divine in origin and whether it is biblical material.

The subject of Canonicity seeks to answer these questions: (1) Why was each book of the Bible placed there? (2) Why have certain other books been refused a place in the Bible? (3) Why have all these books been brought together in one volume? (4) Does this volume contain all the books which properly belong there? ... (5) Has any book which should be

there been omitted? (6) Does our Bible contain any book which should not be there?
(Miller 90)

Through His providence, God has provided numerous copies of Bible books that are canonical. At the same time, God has expunged from consideration by not preserving even a single copy of writings though they were inspired that He did not desire included in the Bible. For instance, there was an earlier epistle than 1 Corinthians (5:9), and the apostle Paul had also written an epistle to the Laodiceans (Colossians 4:16). Therefore, so-called, long lost single manuscripts that someone claims is a Bible book fails to match the facts, and without doubt will also fail the various tests of canonicity.

The Book of Job is viewed as canonical especially based on two considerations. “The first is, that it was found in the canon of the Jewish Scriptures to which the Saviour gave his sanction as inspired; and the other is, that it is quoted in the New Testament as of divine authority” (*Barnes’ Notes*).

Inspiration in the Book of Job

Since the apostle Paul quoted from the speech of Eliphaz (Job 5:13; 1 Corinthians 3:19), were Eliphaz’s words inspired? Throughout the Bible, the student of Scripture always needs to see who is speaking to whom and realize that words by uninspired persons frequently appear in the Holy Book. Sometimes those uninspired utterances are true, whereas sometimes they are at least partly false.

Are the words spoken by Eliphaz inspired? It hardly seems possible and completely unnecessary to affirm that proposition. Certainly the original writer of the great book of Job was inspired... Eliphaz spoke words that were true; although not appropriate nor applicable to the man Job, the words themselves were words of truth and no doubt came from a lifetime of experience and observation. When Paul quoted these words, he did so by the authority and guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit knew these words to be fundamentally free from error and true from the observation of mankind. ...This is not the only occasion uninspired spokesmen have been quoted in the New Testament. So it is not unique. Paul used another example of this in Titus (1:2-13). This quote used by the inspired apostle was taken from Epimenedes who had lived somewhere between the years 630 and 500 B.C. (Cox 189-190)

Lessons from the Book of Job

Harder for Job than for we who read, study and digest the volume bearing his name, both Job and we learn invaluable lessons from the Book of Job.

Even though Job was called “a perfect and an upright man,” there were still some things that Job learned under this chastisement that he would not have learned otherwise. He admitted freely, “therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not” (Job 42:3). ...The greatest thing about these sufferings outside of the fact that Job himself profited in the long run, is that we too profit from his experience. (Cox 197)

There are numerous notes and lessons that we can extract from studying the Book of Job. Some of them are:

- ❖ Job proved “that prosperity and piety are not necessarily mutually exclusive” (Jackson 20).
- ❖ “[E]ven angels are required to give an account of their activities” (Jackson 20).
- ❖ “Piety which depends on prosperity is not genuine” (Waddey 91).
- ❖ The quality of an untested faith is unknown, even to the possessor of faith.
- ❖ “God was not trying to break Job’s faith, he was trying to validate it” (Waddey 91).

- ❖ “Suffering is often a mystery but it should never rob us of our faith in God” (Waddey 91).
- ❖ “Prosperity is not necessarily a sign of righteousness and God’s acceptance” (Waddey 91).
- ❖ Suffering is not necessarily the chastisement or punishment of God for sins in one’s life.
- ❖ “God permitted Job to suffer because He was proud of him. The patriarch was Jehovah’s answer to Satan’s challenge; he was his Maker’s ‘trophy’” (Jackson 14).

One significant error owned and believed by most if not all of the characters in the Book of Job is the mistaken belief that human suffering is directly related to divine retribution for sin. Especially Job’s three chief critics based their accusations against Job on this flawed reasoning. Summarized, their thinking was: “1. All suffering is punishment from God for sin. 2. Although apparently you (Job) have been a good man, yet you suffer. 3. Therefore, since you suffer you have been a great sinner” (Hailey 27). Even Job evidently had believed that proposition—until he became the recipient of great suffering, and he knew (as did God) that he was living his life conscientiously free from sinful pursuits as well as actively performing good works. No wonder Job, too, was perplexed in addition to the effect of his losses and suffering.

The apostles of Christ, likewise, harbored the same misgivings about suffering and its relationship to sin. “Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’ Jesus answered, ‘Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him’” (John 9:1-3 NKJV); our Lord subsequently healed the blind man and declared Himself to be the Son of God (John 9:4-41). Jesus also addressed this generally held misconception about the relationship between sin and suffering in Luke 13:1-5.

This same misunderstanding regarding the relationship between sin and suffering persists today, among non-Christians and Christians, too. For instance, when my Catholic aunt was 40-years-old, she and my uncle had an unplanned pregnancy, which resulted in the birth of a baby with some mental deficiencies. She declared that this came about as punishment of God for her sins. More recently, a Gospel preacher in India who does TV, radio and translation work wrote regarding my wife Bonnie’s health: “We came to know from Sister Betty’s mail that Sister Bonnie had pancreatic cancer. Really we apology about her sickness and **we surprise how God’s children are suffering from such a disease**” (emphasis added). Like Job’s friends, and formerly Job himself, even Christians today seem to equate blessings with righteousness and suffering with sin. “[S]ome church-members and some evangelists... seem to think primarily of material blessings and prosperity in return for serving God. ...the concept is false” (Hailey 28).

Brief Overview of the Book of Job

The Book of Job fleshes out with a real-life demonstration of the biblical principle embedded in Romans 8:18. “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (NKJV). The Book of Job deals with the problem of human suffering. More specifically, “[t]he fundamental problem with which we are confronted in the Book of Job is why do the righteous suffer?” (Strauss xxi).

When one has lost everything he has – his possessions, his children, his health which leaves him suffering excruciating pain – when he loses his wife’s support and faith in God’s concern, endures the accusations of his friends and becomes an outcast from society, how is he to harmonize this with the providence of an all-wise, all-powerful and loving God? (Hailey 15)

Our modern-day lesser woes produce the same or similar frustration in us as well. The Book of Job is as current in application as it was for Job. We, though, have insight through the inspired Word of God that was not immediately or maybe ever available to the patriarch.

Simplified, the Book of Job may be categorized thusly. “I. Job is tested (chapters 1,2); II. Job’s controversy with his three friends (chapters 3-31); III. Elihu’s presentation (chapters 32-37); IV. Jehovah speaks to Job (chapters 38-41); V. Job is blessed (chapter 42)” (Jackson 11).

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