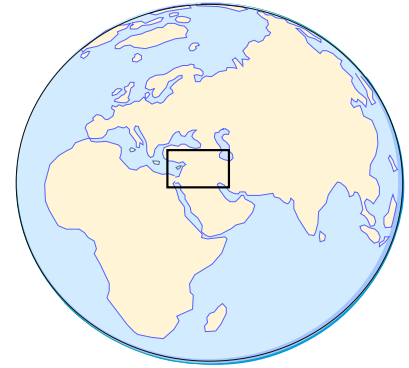


Before starting this lesson, read at least **Job**, chapters **1, 2, 8, 22, 31, 36, 40, 42**. If possible read the whole book. You may find it helpful to read just the minimum chapters, go thru the lesson and then read the whole book. You will discover what works best for you.

In studying the Bible, one of the first questions is *where?* *Where in the world did all of the Old Testament happen?* The simple answer is “in the Middle East.” Geographically, this will cover from the Mediterranean Sea to the Persian Gulf and from the Caspian Sea to the Gulf of Aqaba.

In doing a survey of books, it helps to approach them from the same point of view. In this course, we will look at each Old Testament book asking:

Who wrote it?
When did he write it?
Why did he write it?
Who is it about?
What is he saying?
What does it mean to us?



To get an overall view, there will be a simple outline. The lesson will then develop this outline, picking out the most important parts. Our goal is to see the book as a unit and how it fits with the rest of the Bible.

At the end we will see what it has to do with our lives today.

By answering the questions listed above, every book will cover **author, date, purpose, outline** and **application**.

We are beginning with the book of Job.

First, **who** wrote it? Some say the author is unknown; others suggest Moses, Elihu, Solomon, or Job himself. Since there is nothing in the book to contradict it, I am teaching that Job is the author. Because he writing about himself, he writes in literary 3rd person, from the view of an onlooker. This is a style that many authors use, even today.

Now the date - **when** was this book written?

Obviously, if there is another author, the date would correspond with him. But if Job is the author, it was written c. 2000 BC, during the time of Abraham. We know this based on 3 facts.

First of all, anthropology.

When a culture or people determines their wealth by the number of animals, anthropology dates them a society of 2000 BC. In the book of Job, *his* wealth is determined by his animals.

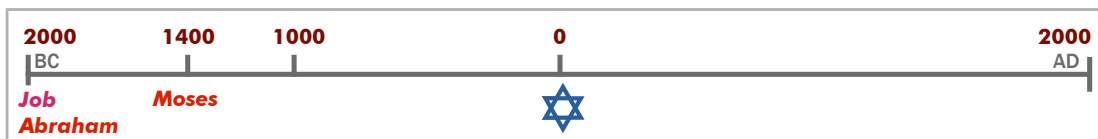
Secondly, the book itself does not mention the Jews, Israel as a nation or any of the laws given to Moses.

This means it was written **before** the days of Moses.

Thirdly, the book says Job offers sacrifices for his adult children every morning.

Before the time of Moses and the Jewish nation, it was the responsibility of the father, the one with the birthright, to act as priest for all his family clan.

So because Job acted as family priest, because the law of Moses is not mentioned and the way in which Job's wealth is expressed, we know that he lived c. 2000 BC. This makes him a contemporary of Abraham.



We all know Genesis starts with the beginning - with creation, so why are we studying Job first? The answer is in the timing.

Moses is the author of Genesis. He wrote about creation, but he did not live at that time. He lived c. 1400 BC.

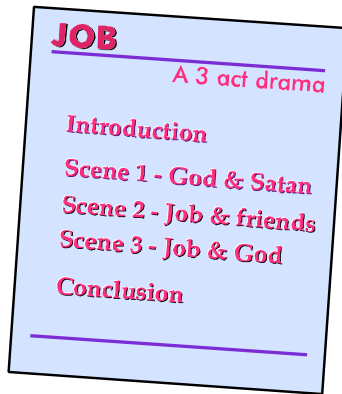
Job lived in 2000 BC. If he is the author of the book, then his book was written 600 years before the books of Moses. I am taking the books in the order of writing, Job first and then Moses.

This is a good time to remind us. The birth of Jesus is the point from which our calendar is fixed. After His birth, the dates count **up** from 1 to 2000. It is referred to as AD - the Latin abbreviation for “in the year of our Lord”. Before the birth of Jesus, dates count **down** from 2000 to 1. It is referred to as BC, meaning “before Christ”.

Most of the world today uses the letters CE meaning “common era, or BCE - *before the common era*. The purpose is to avoid using the name *Christ*. However their “common era” still begins with the birth of Jesus. So in these lessons we will continue to use the terms BC and AD.

All the Old Testament is before Christ so for all of the Old Testament overview, we will always be counting backwards, from 2000 down to 400 BC.

We start with Job in 2000 BC.



The basic story happens over a period of one year or less. The Holy Spirit guides Job to write about his experience to teach us about suffering. The story involves Satan, God, Job and his 4 friends. It is written in the form of a drama. It is the oldest drama in all of world literature.

This gives us the outline.

Imagine for a moment that you are in an audience, looking up at a stage with the curtains closed. A narrator comes out to give the setting - the **introduction**.

When he finishes, he leaves the stage and the curtains open for **Scene one**.

The stage is divided. One half represents heaven, the other half, earth. The spotlight turns first to the conversation in heaven - then to events on earth. It returns to another conversation in heaven; then to more events on earth. The curtains close.

When they open for **Scene 2**, Job and his friends are having their long discussions. When they finish, the curtains close.

Scene 3 opens to give us the conversation between Job and God. The curtains close for the last time.

But what happens to Job? Do the friends realize they have been wrong? Does Job find out why this happened? This is why the narrator comes out and gives us a **conclusion** or epilogue.

With this in mind, let's look at the details.

According to Job 1:1, Job lived in the land of Uz. This is an area that includes land east of the Jordan River and south into Saudi Arabia.

At that time, it was ideal for raising large flocks and herds of animals. It was rich in vegetation.

Verse 1 also gives 4 statements about Job's life.

First, he is said to be *blameless* or *perfect*.

To us this means he never does anything wrong.

We assume the word “perfect” means “perfect”.

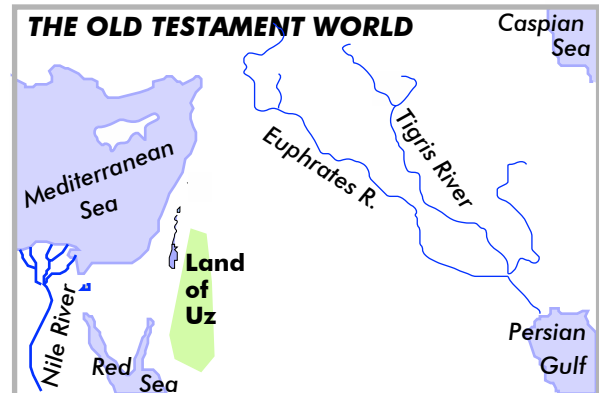
It is easy to think the meaning of our words today is the same as they were in the Bible, 3000 or more years ago. But this is not true.

Languages, places, cultures and time can change the meaning of words. This is why God has given the gift of teaching to the Church. We need the help of teachers who can explain how the words were used in that culture and how we would accurately express them today.

The word *blameless* or *perfect*, when used in the Bible, means a person is right with God. They do things wrong, but are forgiven because they come to God in God's way. According to verse 1, Job is right with God.

A second statement about Job is that he is *upright*. This means he is right with those around him. He is honest, fair and good in his relationship with others.

Verse 1 also says he fears God. This means awe and worship of God Himself. It is the “wow” of God when Job is so overwhelmed with some part of God's character that he is speechless.



But there is another part to the fear of God. It includes a literal fear of God's consequences if he disobeys.

Notice the distinction. God never wants Job to have a literal fear of **Him**. But He does want Job to literally fear the consequences if he disobeys. Job has the perfect balance. This is brought out in the next phrase. We are told Job avoids or shuns evil. It is talking about his choices. Because he fears the consequences, he chooses to obey God - to do what is right.

Verses 2-3 describe his family and material wealth. He has 7 sons, 3 daughters and large herds of animals. The end of verse 3 says Job was the greatest man among all the people of the East. *Greatest* includes the ideas of *highly respected, well known, rich and very important*. The *people of the East* refers to those living on the other side of the Jordan River. Geography in the Bible is always from the starting point of Israel.

These are the things the narrator tells us about Job: where he lives, his personal life, his family and his wealth.

The actual drama or scene one now begins with the spotlight in heaven. According to Job 1:6, *the sons of God* present themselves before God.

In the New Testament, *sons of God* refers to us, those who have put their faith in Jesus. But in the Old Testament, *sons of God* is a Jewish phrase meaning *angels*. So in Job 1:6, some of your Bibles have automatically changed the word to *angels*.

These are the good angels. They present themselves before God to give an account of their activities. They are also waiting for His next commands, as God's messengers or servants. Satan is also an angel; but he is a bad angel. So what is he doing in heaven?

At the time of Job, Satan does not live in heaven, but he still has access to it. The name Satan means *accuser*. Satan is entering God's presence to accuse Job and to accuse God.

In the conversation with Satan, God mentions Job. *Have you noticed him - his life and his choices?* Satan replies, *Of course Job follows You. He has never had to suffer a day in his life because You have protected him. But Job does not follow and love You for who You are; he follows You only for the things You give him. Let him experience suffering and he will reject You.*

Satan accuses God of bribery. God has bribed Job to obey and love Him, by keeping him from suffering. This is not true. But since Job has never suffered up to this point, God now allows it. He gives Satan permission to touch Job's possessions. For the first time he will experience loss like other people do.

With this, the scene shifts from heaven to earth.

In 1:14-19, Job goes thru 4 disasters that are common in the Middle East.

Two disasters involve enemies that steal his animals.

The other 2 are disasters of nature.

One destroys his property while the other kills his adult children. As a result, he loses all his possessions and his 10 children.

These disasters bring suffering, not only to Job, but also to everyone who lives in this area. Many lose possessions and family members. We are reading only about Job because this is the 1st time **he** has suffered loss. The question is, how will he react after leading such a sheltered life?

His reactions are found in 1:20

His human reaction is to tear his robe, shave his head and sit in a pile of ashes. This is how people of that culture expressed their grief when they felt overwhelmed and devastated. From this we know that Job is overwhelmed. His grief is profound.

In the time of his grief Job has to make some choices - to turn from God or to God. Even if he turns to God, he has to choose his attitude towards God. Is he going to shake his fist at God, saying, *it's not fair, You have no right to do this to me?* Or will he say, *God I need you more than ever.*

His spiritual reaction is to fall to the ground in worship. In verse 21 he says

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. In my profound grief, I still will trust Him.

Verse 22 says, *In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrong doing.*

Now the scene shifts back to heaven. Satan is before God and God once again commends the life of Job. God says to Satan, *Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And he still maintains his integrity, though **you** incited **Me** against him to ruin him without any reason.* 2:3

This sounds like Satan is in control, forcing God to do something He does not want to do. But that is not what it means. God is always in control and Satan can only do what God allows. The problem is in the difference of language and culture. In the Middle East, strong, extreme words are used for non-extreme meanings.

So let me paraphrase this verse as we would say it today.

God says to Satan, *I had not yet tested his faith thru suffering or sickness. But when you accused and challenged Me, I agreed to let you bring suffering even tho Job had not done anything wrong. And see, Job did not turn against Me.*

Satan's first accusation failed, so now he brings a second accusation in 2:4-5. To paraphrase him, Satan says, *People can rise to the occasion when they lose their possessions; but You take their health and they will turn on You. Job has never been sick. If he has to physically suffer, he will reject You.*

To answer this 2nd accusation, God gives Satan permission to touch Job's health. He cannot kill him, but he can affect his health for a limited time.

With this, the spotlight shifts back to earth. Job is covered with boils - with infected, running ulcers. Using the common method of that day, he uses pieces of pottery to lance or open the boils so the infection can drain and be removed. The ulcers are painful, ugly and repulsive. There is no comfortable position in which he can sit, lie or stand.

His wife suggests he hurry up and get it over with. *Curse God and die* is just the response Satan is looking for. But Job replies in 2:10 *You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God and not trouble? In all this Job did not sin in what he said.*

Because Job is human, of course he has thoughts and questions. They are not sin. He has no control over them because they just pop into his mind. But Job can control what he does with the questions and thoughts. He can lash out at God or trust God. At this point we are told that *Job did not sin by anything he SAID.*

Scene 1 is concluded and the curtains close.

Scene 2 finds us with Job and his friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar and Elihu and their many conversations. This is the part that is difficult.

One reason is the repetition. In North America, we want people to say things simply and briefly. In Latin America, Africa and the Middle East, people like to see how many different ways they can say the same thing. Job and his friends are from the Middle East so they use words, illustrations and picture language to make the same point over and over. It is like a waterfall of words that just keep flowing and pouring out. Because it is an agricultural society, everything is based on nature or what they have experienced in life. The repetition makes it hard to see the point they are making.

Another problem is that Job and his friends say many things about God that are true, but they also say things that are not true. Trying to sort them out makes it difficult to follow.

Because this is a survey, I am not going into detail. I want to get their basic concepts. Job's friends are believers in God and know that disobedience of God's rules brings consequences. They have not heard God's statement about Job. So as they see him suffering, they all have the same conclusion. Job is suffering because he has sinned.

8:4 Bildad says, *When your children sinned against Him (God), He gave them over to the penalty of their sin. In other words, your children died because they sinned.* Verse 6, *If you are pure and upright, even now He will rouse Himself on your behalf and restore you to your rightful place. You are suffering because you also sinned.*

11:14 Zophar says, *If you put away the sin that is in your hand and allow no evil to dwell in your tent, then you will lift up your face without shame; you will stand firm and without fear.*

22:5 Eliphaz says, *Is not your wickedness great? Are not your sins endless?*

We know this is not true because God said Job was right with Him. Job also knows his friends are wrong. He keeps telling them, *I am **not** guilty of any sin. This has come from God for no reason.* But they do not listen. They are sure they know the reason and they have the answers.

Job prays for God to come to his rescue and defend him. But God does not choose to do that. As the friends attack him even more, Job starts to focus **only** on his circumstances. In the process, his thinking about God becomes distorted.

Job says, God does not answer me; He never responds to me. 30:20

I feel like God is looking for mistakes just so He can punish me. 7:17-21; 10:3-9

It seems like God makes life difficult whether we obey or disobey. 10:15-17, 9:16-18, 22-24; 14:20

God is always going to see me as guilty, so I never have a chance. 9:28-35

I feel like God attacks me for no reason; 16:9-14

yet in the end, God has a right to do what He wants. chpt. 12, 13:15

As his view of God gets distorted, the view of himself becomes distorted. He now sees himself as a victim, caught in the unfairness of life. In chapters 29, 30 and 31, the little words *I, me and my* are found some 190 times. Let's read Job 29:2-6.

How I long for the months gone by, for the days when God watched over me, when His lamp shone upon my head and by His light I walked thru darkness! Oh for the days when I was in my prime, when God's intimate friendship blessed my house, when the Almighty was still with me and my children were around me, when my path was drenched with cream and the rock poured out for me streams of olive oil.

In chapter 29, Job wishes for the life he used to have. In chapter 30 he describes his life as it is now. In chapter 31 he goes thru a list of sins of that time and then says, *I have never committed any of these sins.* Job has fallen into self-righteousness - into pride and arrogance. He is saying God should accept him because he is good and because he has done so many good things. He has never done all those bad things that other people have done. At this point Job does sin by what he says. In chapter 32:1 we read,

So these 3 men stopped answering Job because he was righteous in his own eyes.

After awhile a younger friend, Elihu begins to speak. Everything he says about God is true. But what he says about Job's suffering is only partly true. He begins by saying Job's suffering is punishment for sin in the past. As we have seen, this is not true. But then he says the suffering can also correct Job's arrogance of the present. God will respond if Job repents. This **is** true.

Finally, all the friends have finished their opinions and with this, Scene 2 ends.

Job has gotten answers from his friends, but he wants answers from God Himself.

So we have **Scene 3**, Job and God.

Looking at 38:2-4, we see God begins HIS discussion with the words *I, Me and My*.

God says, Who is this that darkens MY counsel with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer ME. Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation?

The purpose is to stop Job from looking only at himself and to once again focus on God. In the conversation that follows, God describes **His** power, **His** wisdom, strength and holiness. Then He confronts Job with a very direct question in chapter 40:8.

Are you going to discredit Me and distort My character just so you can say you are right?

This question and God's words about Himself bring Job back to reality. In 42:5 Job responds,

My ears had heard of you, but now my eyes have seen you. This does not mean he literally saw God. The words mean, *Before, I knew about You in theory. Now I understand what You are really like. I see it. I get it.*

Verse 6. *Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.*

The phrase, *I abhor or I despise myself* does not mean *I'm worthless; I'm no good. I hate myself.* Job, being from the Middle East, uses strong words to mean, *I could kick myself for all the things I was saying.*

In the Bible, both in Hebrew and Greek, the word "repent" means *to turn around; to change what you are doing, saying or thinking.* Job is saying, *I've totally changed my thinking. The reason I am good and do good things is because God gave me the desire and ability to be good.*

Job now has it in perspective. He knows he is right with God, not on the basis of what he does, but on the basis of the forgiveness he receives from God. He is good **because of God**.

With this, the curtain closes and the drama is ended. But it certainly is not the end of our questions. Does Job regain his health? Does he get any of his possessions back? This is why the narrator comes out and gives the conclusion.

We are told that God defends Job before his friends. This is what Job had desired and asked for throughout the whole conversation with his friends. God answers his prayer. God tells Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, *You were wrong. You did not speak the truth about Job nor about Me.* God tells them they must now bring sacrifices and let Job pray for them so they can be forgiven. 42:8

God does this for 2 reasons. First, to show the friends they are wrong; they are the ones who need forgiveness. The second reason is to keep Job from having resentment. With all the things his friends said about him, he is bound to have feelings. As he prays for them, his resentment will fade and dissipate.

In chapter 42:10, we are told that **after** Job prays for his friends, the Lord makes him prosperous and doubles his possessions. He has 10 more children and lives 140 more years. This means Job is probably in his 40's when he goes thru this experience.

This is based on chapter 15 when one of the friends says they have gray hairs and are not only older than Job, but older than his father. So if Job is in his 40's, his father would be in his 60's and the friends in their 70's or older.

Job is a very moving drama. But if it is **only** a drama, it is not that relevant.

What does Job have to do with us today? At the beginning we said the purpose of the book is to teach us about suffering.

Lesson 1. Suffering is not always because of sin. Sometimes it is, but other times it is not. We will not always know the exact reason for our suffering. We do not have to find out or understand why. We may never know. In eternity we will find out, but God does not always give us the answers in this life.

Lesson 2. If we focus only on the unfairness of our circumstances, we will get a distorted view of God and of ourselves. We will start to blame God and question His fairness. Then we will see ourselves as victims and blame everyone around us. We will be miserable and make everyone else miserable. Now let me balance this by saying, **Life is unfair.** Many times our situation is totally unfair. God does not expect us to be in denial or ignore that fact. But the unfairness cannot be our complete focus.

Lesson 3. As a friend, there are times we need to explain to a person that their obvious actions produced obvious consequences.

You are suffering because you did this and these are the consequences. But when there are no reasons or answers, we need to speak less and be available to give support and comfort as a true friend.

Lesson 4. God does not create suffering. He is not the source. Suffering has its origin with Satan. God allows it because we live in Satan's world. It is from other parts of the Bible that we get a fuller explanation.

According to the Bible God created a perfect world and perfect people. But when Adam and Eve rebelled against God, all that perfection was lost. Satan was given the role as temporary prince of this world. As a result,

we have an imperfect **world** that brings disasters in nature:

earthquakes, volcanos, floods and droughts.

we have imperfect **bodies** and imperfect genes that are susceptible to sickness and disease.

we have imperfect **minds** and **emotions** that want our own way.



This is why even innocent children suffer. They are born into an imperfect world, with imperfect bodies and live around imperfect adults who make wrong choices and have wrong attitudes. As long as we live in this world, there will be suffering. This is why Jesus came. Because of His death and resurrection, He offers us **eternal** life in a world that will be free from suffering and free from Satan. This present world is not our final home.

A final lesson. Satan wants suffering to destroy our relationship with God. Because God is greater than Satan, God can use the suffering for good. It all depends on our choices. If we choose to turn against God, the suffering will ruin us. If we turn to Him, the suffering will strengthen us even in the midst of our grief, our fear, our doubts and questions. And let me add, never think we can be so spiritual we will not experience grief, fear, doubts or questions. We are human. We will have them. But His grace will give us everything we need to get thru it.

Today there is so much suffering around us. We need to pray for others and for ourselves, the words Jesus said to Peter, *I have prayed for you that your faith remains strong.*