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Job Introduction (Part 1)



Job - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg shares his experience teaching the book of Job and how it can be a difficult read for many people. He discusses the different types of literature found in the Bible, including wisdom literature like Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. He also explores the idea that suffering can make one feel less alone and discusses the historical context of Job as a figure possibly living around 2000 BC.

Transcript

Well, it's an interesting experience for me coming to the book of Job to teach it at this time, because the last time I taught it was, I was trying to think, I think it was 12 or 15 years ago. It's been at least 10, and I'm not sure the exact number beyond that. It's been at least 11, because that's when I closed the old Great Commission School in 1999, and now it's 2010.

But I listened to the introduction of Job that I gave back then, just yesterday. I had left my talk, Job, I didn't have this handout. I just created this over the weekend from scratch.

And then I listened to my old introduction to see how much I may have forgotten, but I couldn't make out when those lectures were given. But one thing I do know is that when I did give them, I mentioned in my introduction, I said, you know, I really haven't suffered much myself. I've suffered a little, a few things, but nothing comparable to Job.

And so, you know, there's a sense in which the study of the book of Job is in measure academic until you've really suffered much. And the experience of the book of Job, as you read it, is very different when you're going through something or when you have recently enough that you can remember what it feels like. And so, I mean, to me, it was not entirely academic when I taught it before.

I had suffered a few things, but in the years since then, I became more acquainted with the actual kinds of suffering. Now, I think Job found the most difficult and it was not what he found most difficult was not the loss of his property and perhaps not even the loss of his children, as that was, I'm sure, and painful to him. And I'm sure it also was not even

close to being the loss of his health, although all of those things would have been excruciating.

It would appear that what was the most difficult thing for him was the loss of his contact with God. That's what he seems to complain about when he in his long speeches. He doesn't really spend much time complaining about the loss of his property or even his children or his health.

He's puzzling over what happened to his relationship with God. Where is God? I thought God was my friend, and now it doesn't seem like it anymore. That seems to be the thing that's hardest for him.

Also, of course, the thing that that really broke him was not the afflictions that came upon him. He was powerfully strong against his against the temptation to curse God and die, which is what the temptation was in those afflictions. He was a champion in those things.

But what really got him to to explode, really, and sometimes to say things as he put it rashly, was when he was falsely accused. And it's interesting how we need to recognize that there's the devil has many ways of trying to get under our skin, including external circumstances, but also getting out our pride, you know, when we feel like we're accused falsely. And that seemed to be Job's weakness more than anything else.

But we're getting ahead of ourselves. Job is one book, one of two, that for a very long time in my early Bible study years, I hadn't read all the way through. I actually read all of the Bible through numerous times, I think, before I read all the way through Job or all the way through Ezekiel, both of which I found burdensome largely because not because of their subject matter, but because of their repetition.

You know, you start to feel like you've heard that broken record enough and you feel like, I don't know, I was never a very good reader, never a very fast reader. And I remember when I was younger, the only thing I ever wanted to read was the Bible because I wanted to know if you read about a third of the way through Job and you feel like, OK, I know what I know what these guys have said. Why do I have to hear them say it again? And so I really found it difficult to finish the book of Job until I actually had to teach through it, which was when I started the Great Commission School.

And then I had to, of course, read through it all the way. And I found that reading through it all the way in one sitting is helpful, if possible. It's a long read, but it's it's good to be able to just enter into the experience of the man in whatever sympathetic way we can, and it becomes much easier if you have experienced some of the same things that he has experienced and to the degree that you have or have not been through great suffering to that very same degree.

You will enter into the experience of the book. And if you have not yet been through great sufferings and perhaps everyone thinks the sufferings they've already been through are great ones. I don't know.

I never thought that the sufferings I've been through in the past had been great ones. I had lost a wife who had been unfaithful. That was that was difficult.

I lost a wife to death. Last time I taught this book, I still was I still felt like it'd be silly for me to say that I've suffered, you know, significantly when there are people who've had those kinds of losses and more like Job or like missionaries like Hudson Taylor, who buried several wives on the mission field. And so did Judson and children.

I should say wives and children. I've always felt that my sufferings were relatively small and they have been even to this day. But but they don't feel small at the time.

And in the years since I last taught Job, some of the things I went through bore much closer resemblance to my mind to the specific things that gave Job trouble. And so I now when I read the book of Job, I read it with great pleasure in a way. I mean, not not pleasure in the sense that it's a pleasant story, but but I feel that there's fellowship in it.

And, you know, Paul said in Philippians that he wanted to know Christ in the fellowship of his suffering. And the more you suffer, as Jesus did in any sense for righteousness sake, the more you can enter into that place of fellowship in his sufferings. And the same thing is true with reading the book of Job.

You kind of feel a fellowship with him in his sufferings. And the Bible says we should in the book of James, it tells us that we should remember Job when we're suffering, that we should think of him and remember his responses and so forth. And so the book of Job, which may be the oldest book of the Bible, according to some.

And according to many, is the most magnificent piece of poetic writing ever written, also serves as a universal balm. When people go through great sufferings and that's its purpose, I say a balm, I don't mean that it makes suffering easier, but it makes suffering less lonely when you realize that somebody has been through something even worse than you have, maybe of a similar sort, though it's always difficult when you're going through great trials and people come to comfort you, as Job's friends did, and they've never been through great trials. They've never.

I mean, it's only academic to them. And a man who is suffering or a woman who is suffering and who is comforted or someone attempts to comfort them who has never been through anything like they've been through. Sometimes it only makes them feel lonelier, like, you know, these people were my friends on my level before I was suffering.

Now they're not at the same level. They don't understand. They haven't been through something like this.

They're trying to understand, but they're not understanding. And it makes you feel like, well, my friends now aren't as close to me. I don't feel as they once were.

But when you have a friend who has suffered like that makes all the difference in the world. When my wife was killed in 1980, every person in the church, and that was about 300 people, at one time or another came up to see me at my home within the first two days after she died. And they all would sit there like Job's comforters trying to think of something to say.

And I didn't blame them. They didn't know what to say. Who knew what to say? What can you say? And, you know, I appreciate the fact that they were sympathetic, but no one's visit quite meant as much to me as that of one guy named Tom, who had lost a wife and a baby in an automobile accident just a few years earlier.

And, you know, when he came up to see me, I felt like, you know, now here's somebody who knows what I'm going through. And there's just a sense of fellowship, even though he was a man I wasn't really that close to, not as close as to some others previously. And so when you read Job, you feel like here's a man who's been through something.

You almost feel like you're in fellowship with him when you are in suffering. Now, when you aren't, it just seems kind of academic. You think, what a tragic story, this poor guy.

But the value of the book of Job certainly is that it brings us into a place of fellowship with a fellow sufferer for righteousness when and if we do go through such things. And we should. We will.

Jesus said, in this world, you'll have tribulation. And that tribulation often is in the form of persecution or, as in Job's case, not direct persecution unless we regard it as persecution from the devil, which it was. The devil was certainly persecuting.

But, I mean, just trouble that you think, well, why are other people not going through this? And I've been faithful to God and I can't think of any reason that these things would come. Well, that's what Job struggled with. And the problem he had was he didn't have the book of Job to help him through it.

We do. And, you know, he didn't have not only did he not have the book of Job, he didn't have one line of scripture. He lived before there was any scripture written.

And therefore, his trials were the more unrelieved for the long time. So we come to the book of Job as a pastoral kind of a book. It's really what's usually called wisdom literature.

There's a whole genre of literature in the Bible and outside the Bible from the Middle East. Which is which goes by that name, wisdom literature, and it's a type of writing usually written in poetry, as is the book of Job and some other books of our Bible that are

wisdom literature like Proverbs and Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon. Some of the Psalms also are of this genre.

They're all written in poetry, but it's not the poetry that gives them their status as wisdom literature because there are poems that are not wisdom. For example, most of the prophets wrote their prophecies in poetry, but they're not wisdom literature. There's something else.

Prophecies, for example, were oracles from God, directly inspired words from God. And wisdom literature isn't viewed that way by the Hebrews and should not be viewed that way by us. It'd be a mistake to read the lines from the book of Job and draw doctrine from the things his friends said or even from the things he said.

Now, maybe from the things God said, certainly there are some speeches that God gives and also the narrative at the beginning and end give us a lot of valuable doctrinal insight. But but with wisdom literature, we're reading, in many cases, people's musings, people's speculations, people's observations about the issues of life in Job. Obviously, the issue that is under examination and is looked at from many different angles is the question of suffering in general and most especially the suffering of an innocent man, as opposed to the suffering of a wicked, which poses fewer philosophical problems.

In Song of Solomon, a different issue of life is examined, which is, of course, romantic love. In Proverbs, many practical issues of life are examined, but we shouldn't, when we read wisdom literature, think that we're reading something like prophecy or even like divine promises. In the book of Proverbs, which has lots of examples of what I'm thinking of, there are things that look like promises, but they're not intended to be promises.

They are observations. Wisdom is observant of reality. It's observant of trends, of the trajectory of events and sees logical connections between things and recognizes cause and effect relationships so that you've got in the Proverbs, for example, Solomon says, A soft answer turns away wrath, but grievous words stir up strife.

OK, well, that's true, isn't it? Well, it's an observation that many could make. Is it a promise? Can you take it as a promise from God that if someone's angry at you and you speak to them softly, their anger will go away? No, that's not always the case. However, if you are in conflict with somebody and they are angry, certainly it is wiser to speak softly to them than otherwise.

That's wisdom, because the tendency is for soft words or gentle words to diffuse anger. But you can't. There's no guarantees that it will.

In every case. Likewise, in the wisdom of Job's friends, they make lots of statements that seem essentially true. Basically, if a man's ways please the Lord, you'd expect, generally speaking, that things would go well for him.

And there's lots of things in the Psalms and elsewhere in Scripture that seem to confirm that the words of Job's friends seem doctrinally sound. Their problem was in thinking that their wisdom was universal and absolute and did not recognize that there were exceptions. Wisdom literature is to be understood as giving generally observable truths, such as a wise man who's paying attention would deduce.

So Solomon often says that, you know, the lazy man will tend to poverty, that the diligent man will tend to wealth. And yet there might be very diligent men who live in societies where wealth just doesn't come to anyone, no matter how hard you work. And that's not a contradiction, because it is generally the case that all other things being equal, a busier man, a more diligent man will produce more than a lazy man.

But you'll occasionally find that lazy man who inherited his wealth and he lives and dies wealthy and he never does a lick of work. So, again, wisdom is not promises or guarantees. Even the Christians like to take some of them as promises, and I don't blame them.

I certainly wanted to when I was raising children. This is, you know, train up a child in the way that he'd go. And when he's old, he will depart from it.

Many Christians, including myself, saw that more or less as a promise of God. But I see that it belongs to the wisdom literature where it is generally something that is true. Your wisdom, basically, wisdom is in the biblical sense of that word.

Wisdom means that you have discernment about what is of value and you have understanding and insight as to what methods will most tend to reaching that goal of value. If it is your goal to be wealthy, then there are certain habits and methods you can employ that would be the wise way to seek to be wealthy. You might not succeed, but you are more likely to succeed by following wise things.

A man who is very wise may tend toward wealth and then the economy may collapse and he may not be wealthy. There's not a guarantee that he'll be wealthy. But the idea is, if this is your goal, this is the wise thing to do.

And any other course would be unwise if you want to reach this goal. Wisdom sees the correct path to the goal and biblical wisdom, which is godly wisdom, also sees what goals are the right goals. Wisdom sees the long range outcome of things, whereas we would otherwise, perhaps if we're not so wise, look at the short range.

Outcome. And so because of that, divine wisdom always has the fear of God as its basis, because anyone who does not fear God, whatever else may come to him. That's positive.

He's facing a judgment that will be negative in the end. And anyone who would place temporal happiness above their eternal happiness is not not being wise. A wise man sees that it's more important to please God than to please himself.

And then he also sees what kinds of patterns of life will please God. So the wisdom literature explores those things. If a man wishes to be wise, if he wants to be happy in his latter end because God is happy with him and because he's got God's favor.

What are the ways of life that that would tend toward that goal? And that's what wisdom literature is essentially about. And the Hebrews were very fascinated with this subject of wisdom. The kings of Israel had three ways by which they could discern the mind of God as the kings of Israel were required to please God and to direct Israel in godly ways.

And to make decisions that would move the country in the ways that God wants it to go. There were three options for the kings of Israel to know what God wanted them to do. One was, of course, the law itself, the Torah.

God gave his principles of righteousness there and a king should obey them. But there were times when things needed to be done that the Torah didn't describe, you know, the exact decision had to be made. And then a second option was to receive an oracle from the prophets.

The prophets would give a contemporary word from God to the king. It would never violate what the law of God said, but it would perhaps make an application or simply reveal the mind of God about a present situation that would not be addressed by the general teachings of the law and its basic ethics. But there was also a third thing.

There was the law, there was the prophets, and there was also the wisdom of the aged or of the wise. And it was considered that wisdom was also a means by which God makes his will known to us. If you read the book of Proverbs, you can't help but see that that Solomon thinks that the man who is following wisdom is essentially following God.

Wisdom speaks in Proverbs as if wisdom is the voice of God. You see, the assumption is that man is the one creature, the one species on earth that God has given the capacity to have rational thought, to think things through and to make responsible choices. Animals don't do that, animals do things that seem wise, and sometimes they're given human anthropomorphic characteristics like the wisdom of the ant, you know, consider the ant, you sluggard, consider her ways and be wise.

Solomon says like she has wisdom, the ant does. Well, the ant does exhibit wisdom, such wisdom as humans might well imitate. But that wisdom of the ant is not from the innate rationality of the animal.

It is God's wisdom built into the animal. But we have our own wisdom built into us, our own ability to rationally think and logically figure things out. And we are expected to do so.

And so there are right and wrong ways of reasoning, right and wrong ways of thinking. And so the right ways of thinking were called wisdom. And it was considered that when a

person is thinking rightly, they are using a capacity that God has given them.

And they are in that way doing the will of God, too. So the will of God is made known to a person through the written scriptures, as to the kings of Israel, they had the law through the prophetic word that's current. They had the prophets in biblical times, we have the Holy Spirit himself who can reveal things to us.

And then, of course, just through wisdom. And the kings had their counselors. And, you know, there was a counselor named Ahithophel, who was David's counselor, and he had a reputation for being so wise that they said to inquire counsel from Ahithophel was like to inquire of the oracles of God.

In other words, he was so wise that they considered his counsel is almost equivalent to what a prophet would speak. And so wisdom often was seen as the way that God makes his will known to people. And so wisdom literature has its place in our Bible.

You see, we have those three things in our Bible, too. We have the law, we have the prophets and we have the wisdom literature. And all of these are ways by which a person can know what God wants them to do.

But we but each of these things serve in a different way. The law, it gives us foundational principles that should never be violated, that the ethical principles should never be violated. The prophets, when they speak, are making current application of God's principles.

And then wisdom kind of fills in when we don't have the word from those other sources. You get a direct word from God about something that's the best of all possible things you can hope for. But if you don't, then you're expected to go by the wisdom that God gives.

And therefore, the Hebrews had a whole class of men called wise men and a class of literature called wisdom literature. And Job is such literature. You should not think that anything in Job other than that, which is the narration and perhaps the speeches from God himself.

Necessarily carry the kind of inspiration that an oracle from God does or a law, because although the speeches are found in a book of the Bible, their speeches of people who make mistakes and the Bible clearly says, Job clearly says in chapter forty two that Job's friends did not speak rightly of God. Now, you know, when you've got their speeches occupying pages and pages of Scripture and then you're told they didn't speak the right things, you have to say, well, then why are they in the Scripture? Well, they're in the Scripture, not for us to believe what they said, but for us to see how they were thinking and to try to figure out where they were wrong, because they clearly were wrong about some things. It's like when, you know, Genesis chapter three records the words of Satan.

It doesn't mean that because they're recorded in Scripture, they're reliable. It's just a

record of what they said, what he said. And you're supposed to make your own assessment of its level of reliability or not.

Now, the book of Job, I said, is wisdom literature and is poetry. But there is an exception. There is there are two parts of the book that are not written in poetry.

Chapters one and two are written in prose and then chapter forty two from verse seven to the end is also in prose. Everything in between is poetry. The book is essentially a dialogue or a triologue or a panel discussion, maybe in poetry.

And to which is affixed a prose prologue in the first two chapters and a prose epilogue at the end. Why this is so, why these two different styles are mixed in one book, no one really knows. There are some, of course, who think that the two sections came into existence independently.

Some feel that the prose sections represent a folk tale, perhaps a true one. But a folk tale, nonetheless, which circulated on its own, maybe for generations, maybe for centuries, and that the poetic sections were added by a later writer who decided to develop the folk tale into a piece of poetry. I don't take this view, but there are some who would suggest it because of the difference in the in the styles of the poetic sections and the prose sections.

We'll talk about that more a little later at a different time. But the question of whether Job was a historical character or not is certainly one of those things that people have questioned, because the book begins with the words, there was a man. And elsewhere in scripture, sometimes a parable will start with those words.

But sometimes an actual historical account will start with those words, too, elsewhere in scripture. The term, there was a man, introduces a story, but it does not tell you whether it's a true story or not a true story. And some feel that there are features of this story that are too perfect to be true.

And it's more a parable or a moral tale. Why? Well, partly because of all the symmetry of everything, the perfect numbers of the children of the cattle and everything of Job. The fact that his childhood and one after another and and all the people who reported and spoke almost exactly the same words ending their speech with an eye alone have escaped.

I mean, these things look literary and some people say, well, we shouldn't understand this to be a story that literally happened this way. It looks like a literary work that's written to teach some moral lessons or some lessons about suffering and so forth. Well, there's certainly plenty of Christians who feel that they could take Job as a parable, just like some Christians feel they could take the book of Jonah as a parable and some other books that they find hard to understand, hard to accept.

Literally, there's a lot of Christians who think that the first 11 chapters of Genesis are to be taken more as parables or myths than as history. But all of these stories are treated in the New Testament as if they are true. And in the Old Testament as well.

For example, in Ezekiel, Chapter 14, when God is speaking about the doomed and hopeless condition of Jerusalem because of its great apostasy against God. One of the things he says about it through Ezekiel in Chapter 14 and verse 14 of Ezekiel, God said, well, let's look at verse 13 and 14. Son of man, when a land sins against me by persistent unfaithfulness, I will stretch out my hand against it.

I will cut off its supply of bread, send famine on it and cut off man and beast from it. Though these three men, Noah, Daniel and Job, were in it, they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness, says the Lord God. And then verses 19 and 20.

Or if I send a pestilence into that land and pour out my fury on it in blood and cut off from it man and beast, even though Noah, Daniel and Job were in it, as I live, says the Lord God, they would deliver neither son nor daughter. They would deliver only themselves by their righteousness. Now, what God is saying here, apparently, is that the city is so corrupt that even a remnant of very faithful men in the city could not save it, which seems different than what he had told Abraham about Sodom, that if there had been a sufficient remnant of righteous people in Sodom, God would have spared the whole city for their sakes.

But God is saying if there was a sufficient remnant of godly men in Jerusalem at this time, they would not secure the city's forgiveness. They would escape, but they alone would escape. I would not, of course, destroy them with the city, but their righteousness would only deliver themselves and not the city itself.

The city is too far gone, in a sense, further gone than Sodom in that respect. Now, the point is that when God chose to name some individuals, some righteous individuals, he mentions Noah, Daniel and Job. Now, I don't want to get into the question of whether Daniel here is really the book of the man from the book of Daniel or not.

I believe it is. And he was contemporary with Ezekiel. There are some scholars who I don't think they have adequate reasons, but they think that Daniel here is a reference to a mythical hero from ancient times named Danel, because in the Hebrew, the name is Danel here.

But it could be an alternate spelling of Daniel. In any case, Noah is a historical character. And Daniel.

If that's who's referred to here, and I believe it is, is a historical character, it would be strange to list Job. Along with two historical characters, if God did not believe Job was a historical character and who would know better than God, the speaker in this word in

these words is God himself saying this. So God seems to confirm that Job was a genuinely righteous historical character.

And then we have what James has to say in the New Testament, in James, chapter five, in urging Christians to be persevering under hard times, James five verses 10 and 11, he says, my brethren, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord as an example of suffering and of patience. Indeed, we count them blessed who endure.

You have heard of the perseverance of Job and have seen the end intended by the Lord, that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful. Now, he mentions the prophets who certainly were historical characters. He mentions Job along with them as examples for our encouragement.

When we're in trial, the prophets suffered for the Lord and Job did. In fact, he says the story of Job should particularly be instructed to us. Because we see in that story that in the end, God is very kind and merciful and comes to Job's aid.

Now, one might say, well, when I read the book of Job, my impression was not that God was extremely merciful and compassionate. Job. After all, the fact that God did restore double to Job at the end hardly.

Hardly compensates, one would think for the horrible things he went through and the losses he sustained, especially the loss of children. But James believes, and I think God does, too, that for a man to go through great suffering, even if he doesn't have things restored in this life to him, if he suffers for righteousness, there is reward and it is worth going through there. The main thing we have to consider is whether suffering has a value in itself, not whether it has particular value to me, but whether it has a value in the larger scheme of God's plans.

But the point I make in James is that James treats Job as if he's just as much of a historical character as the prophets. And it would hardly be a comfort to someone who's suffering in real life to be reminded of a person who is recognized to be a fiction. You know, like when you're really going through the furnace of affliction for some say, well, remember so and so who everyone regards to be a fictional character, but one whose story is inspiring.

I don't know that that would be helpful. I think only if Job really is a true story and if his story really does reflect an instance of God's dealings with a man, could the things James said really be helpful or be and make sense. Now, one of the things we have to find out is who wrote Job.

Well, we don't have to find out. We just have to discuss it. We will never find out who wrote Job because no one knows.

But one thing we do need to discuss it because it does claim to be a revelation from God

in some respects. After all, there are speeches that God gives in the end. Also, it's obvious that the material in the first two chapters about the discussion between God and Satan did not take place with human witnesses present.

And for that reason, you know, someone had to have that revealed to them. And so the writer must be what we call a prophet. Anyone who gets direct revelation from God and repeats it accurately is a prophet.

That's the definition of a prophet. And the latter chapters of Job, where God is speaking, certainly reflect a direct revelation from God. And it is written.

And likewise, the first two chapters must have come from direct revelation from God if they are true. Therefore, the writer must be a prophet. But what prophet? Some people believe that Job could have written this and it is possible if he did, then it is truly the oldest book of our Bible.

Because Job did live earlier than, well, probably earlier than Moses and Moses wrote the other earliest books of our Bible. So if Job wrote his own story for us, then this piece of writing is the most ancient known book in the world. But it doesn't say that Job wrote it.

It's possible that he did because he did receive revelation from God in those speeches that God makes at the end. Those were addressed to Job and therefore he was a prophet. He did receive words directly from God.

It's possible that also at the same time or at a later time, God may have revealed to him the material in chapters one and two. And so it's possible that Job is the author, but it doesn't claim that it's so. So we can't be sure.

Others have thought maybe Elihu is the author. I mean, he was sitting there silently during most of that part of the book. Maybe he was writing down the speeches, taking down notes.

Who knows? No one really knows. The view of one ancient Jewish source and some of the church fathers was that Moses wrote it. I'm not sure why, except that perhaps because Moses wrote Genesis, which is, you know, ancient stories of the patriarchs and so forth.

And so is this. Maybe they felt like, you know, the story was closest in proximity to Moses time of the known biblical writers. And so they thought that Moses may have written it.

Probably a more common view among scholars is that Solomon wrote it. Now, this would not mean that the story of Job took place somewhere near the time of Solomon, but rather that the story was old. The story had been around for a long time.

And the present literary form that has been brought down to us may have been written by Solomon or someone in his time. The reason for that argument, and probably it's the

one that is held by most evangelicals, is that this style is the kind of style of writing that Solomon's other writings are. The wisdom style of poetry.

Of course, that could be said of perhaps any Hebrew poet of a wide range of times before and after Solomon. But it was the times of Solomon that wisdom literature really flourished. And Solomon himself wrote three of the books of wisdom literature that we have and could have written this one.

But we don't know if it is so that he did. Some have felt that the story did not originally have these poetic speeches. There may have been speeches that were recorded or remembered, but that Solomon may have put them into the poetic form that they take in the book of Job.

Some have thought this disturbs someone's ideas of how inspiration takes place. We should remember that the apostles who wrote the Gospels. They took the words of Jesus and from time to time would paraphrase them for their readers sake.

And we know this is true because we can look at parallel statements of Jesus in the in the different Gospels made on the same occasion and see that one writer has actually paraphrased it and put it a little differently than another one has. And so apparently it would not be irreverent for somebody taking the faithful germ of what was said and and paraphrasing it if he happened to be a poet into poetry. You know, some feel like it might even be a little bit like how Shakespeare's historical novels were written.

There's a germ of historical truth about Henry VIII or whoever or Henry the whatever. I don't know who all the historical novels Shakespeare wrote, but there is a historical character that really these things mostly happen. Let's take Julius Caesar.

And and yet speeches are embellished with poetry and so forth in Shakespeare's retelling of them. Some feel Solomon may have done something like that with a true story. But the speeches have been embellished in poetry.

Some feel a later prophet may have written it. And of course, the more liberal a scholar is, the more likely they are to put a late date on the writing of virtually any book of the Bible. And some of them want to place it as late as the days of the prophets, maybe even Jeremiah, they say, could have written it.

I don't think he did. Jeremiah is believed did write the books of Kings. So it's entirely possible that Jeremiah did write other books of the Bible besides Kings and Jeremiah and Lamentations.

He could have written this book, but I don't think there's much reason for it. The main reason for suggesting Jeremiah is that there's a very similar lament in Jeremiah, Chapter 20, similar to the lament of Job in Job, Chapter three. And in Jeremiah, Chapter 20, verses 14 through 18, Jeremiah says, cursed be the day in which I was born.

Let the day not be blessed in which my mother bore me. Let the man be cursed who brought news to my father, saying a male child has been born to you, making him very glad. And let the man be like the cities which the Lord overthrew and did not relent.

Let him hear the cry in the morning and so forth. Obviously, Jeremiah is feeling some of the same sentiments there that Job was feeling in Chapter three of his book. But that is very far from suggesting common authorship of the two.

So we really don't know who wrote it. And a person would be welcome to take any theory he wishes and hold to it. No one will disprove him.

But one thing I think we could say is the book certainly gives the kind of information that could only be given by a prophet unless it's a forgery. And it hardly seems likely that it is, since both the Old Testament and James make positive references to Job. Now, what time frame did Job live? We don't know the time frame that it was written, because a story that was very ancient could have been written down at a later date.

But when did the story actually occur? And I think all scholars agree, even those who think it's not a true story, that the setting of the story is in the patriarchal period. And there are good reasons to say that the patriarchal period would be the times of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And following prior to the exodus, that would mean, of course, that the story belongs in the it's either parallel to some of the later stories in Genesis or even maybe after the close of Genesis.

Once Jacob and his family have gone into Egypt and settled there. But before they left Egypt with Moses, so that perhaps during the centuries that Israel was in Egypt, this story may have occurred. Now, why would it be put in a time frame like that? Well, for one thing, the lifespan of Job, which is pretty close to 200 years, chapter 42, verse 16, says he lived after this, after his troubles.

He lived 140 years and saw his children and grandchildren for four generations. Well, he probably is an oldish man when these things happen, at least middle age. So if he lived 140 years after that, then his age, total age, was very similar to that of the time of the patriarchs, not as old at all as persons living before the flood.

But but older than the average age, you know, let's say the time of the exodus. So generally, this was kind of he lived the length of time that most of the patriarchs did. Also, his wealth in the book of Job is measured in terms of his livestock and his number of children rather than in gold and silver and such things as that.

At a later time, especially city dwellers, their wealth would be measured in gold and silver. But as with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Job's wealth was measured in terms of how many camels and sheep and children he had. And that seems very patriarchal.

In terms of giving some evidence of the time setting. Also, the note the Chaldeans raided

him and killed some of his livestock and his servants. That would be pretty early on because Chaldeans later settled and became, you know, the Babylonians and all that.

The southern Babylon, if they were still nomadic raiders at this time, it would be very early in the Chaldean history. And then one of Job's friends was Bildad the Shuhite. Virtually all scholars agree that Shuhite comes from the name Shua, which was one of Abraham's sons by Keturah.

In Genesis 25, one and two, we read about the sons that were born to Abraham after. Well, it sounds like it's after Sarah died. In any case, whenever they were born, one of them was Shua.

And that means that one of Job's friends, one of his contemporaries, was descended from Shua. And therefore, Job lived after Abraham because he had to be living after Shua, which was Abraham's son. But also after Esau's time, apparently, because some of his friends were Edomites.

Eliphaz, in particular, which is a name that's found in the genealogies of Esau, is said to be a Temanite. And the Temanites presumably are descended from Teman, who was a grandson of Esau. So if a man was a Temanite, that means that his ancestor, one of his ancestors, would have been Teman.

And yet Teman was a grandson of Esau. So we're looking at someone living contemporary with, say, Joseph's children or Judah's children. Grandsons of Esau's twin brother would be contemporary with Teman.

And therefore, probably we're looking at a time during the early stages of the captivity of the Jews in Egypt. However, it was before the Exodus, I think all agree, because there is no reference to the Levitical law. And we do find Job offering burnt offerings for his children.

But he doesn't go to any tabernacle to do so, doesn't go to Shiloh or any of those places where the tabernacle later would be after the Exodus. And furthermore, in all the discussions of all the discussions of the sufferings and so forth with him and his friends, there is no allusion at all to God's laws or even to the stories of Genesis. For example, one might think if the Exodus had occurred and Moses had written his books and Genesis was available and so forth, that there would have been a case to be made from the story of Joseph, that righteous men do suffer.

I mean, Job is trying to point out to his friends that their belief that only wicked men suffer is not necessarily universal, though he doesn't point out any specific examples other than his own. He would have a very good precedent to call upon in the story of Joseph. If the story of Joseph was known to him, it may not have been.

It may be that Genesis was not yet written. And therefore, we're still talking about time

before the time of Moses and before the Exodus. So I think all all things considered, that is, you know, the time between the entrance of Jacob and his family into Egypt and their exit with Moses is the time frame for this story.

Sometimes the name Job has been found in documents outside the Bible, though it's not the same Job. But there is confirmation that that was a real name in those ancient patriarchal times, a prince of Ashtoreth and Bashan, by the name of Job, is mentioned in the Armada tablets, which date from about 1350 B.C. And that'd be approximately the time of Moses right there. And then even earlier, around 2000 B.C., there's an Egyptian text that makes reference to a Palestinian chief named Job.

So in the time of Abraham, that's when the Egyptian text dates from the time of Abraham to the time of Moses, we have documentation that the name Job existed. And in both cases, it was the name of royalty, a prince or a chief of a people. So neither of those Jobs were the Job we're here talking about, but that the name is not just some fabrication made up by some people centuries later seems to be confirmed.

Also, many of the names of his friends and so forth can be confirmed from outside sources, not that not that those individuals are named by outside sources, but the names they bear can be confirmed from outside sources. Now, where Job lived is said to have been in the east. That's what it says at the end of verse three of chapter one, that he was the greatest of all the people of the east.

In verse one, it says he was of the land of Uz. Now, Uz exact location of Uz is not necessarily known, though in Genesis chapter 10, Uz is mentioned as a son of Aram, who was one of the Shemites. I'm assuming, yeah, the Shemites, right? Aram, the father of the Syrian nation, basically was also the father of this man, Uz.

But more importantly, Nahor, the brother of Abraham, had a son named Uz by Milcah. And most scholars think that this Uz is probably the land of that man, Uz, and therefore, a remote relative of Abraham's, a distant cousin of some kind was the founder of that region of that land. The assumption of many scholars, probably most, is that the region just to the northeast of the Sea of Galilee is probably where the land of Uz was and that that's where Job was from.

He would therefore be close enough to Palestine to have been aware of Palestine and of the River Jordan, for example. The River Jordan is mentioned in the description of Behemoth because he drinks up the River Jordan. And so probably the Jordan was nearby, but it was Job was on the other side, on the east side, not in the promised land.

As far as the religious notions of the time in the background of this, this is before the time of Moses. Therefore, it was before the law was given at Sinai, before even the Book of Genesis was written, although the book, the records that Moses used in writing the Book of Genesis may have been around, whether they were known to Job or not is

entirely unable to be documented because he doesn't make reference to them. But we see that he lived during the patriarchal time when the father of the household was the priest of the household, as he offered sacrifices for his children and even for his friends later on.

He also knew the name Yahweh, which was, of course, the God of Israel. But most of the time he and his friends use other words, other names for God, like Eloah, which is the singular of which Elohim is the plural. We know the word Elohim, the singular of that is Eloah, and that's used quite frequently in the Book of Job and also the name Shaddai, which means the Almighty.

And so these are more generic names for God, but the name Yahweh was not unknown to him and probably would not be. Nahor knew the name Yahweh, and if Uz was from Nahor and Job was from that stock, or if Job was an Edomite, as is possible, because some of his friends were Edomites, then they would certainly know the name Yahweh because of the family connections to Abraham who worshipped Yahweh. But more commonly, they spoke of God as the Almighty or simply as God.

Now, let's talk about this story just in outline. The book begins by describing Job's prosperity and his dignity with which he was held in the region he was. He was the greatest of the men of the East, possibly a chief of a tribe, although there's no mention specifically of that, maybe a king if there were kings in that region at that time, though there's no mention of that.

The main thing is he was wealthy in cattle and in children, and in that respect, the wealthiest of all the men of his region. And so we're introduced to that, but not only his wealth, but more importantly, his righteousness. He was a man who feared God, who eschewed evil.

He was blameless and upright. He was a man that God himself spoke highly of and referred to as a blameless man. And so God actually says there's none like him in all the earth.

We're not just dealing with a righteous man here. We're dealing with one that God says he's the most righteous man I know on the planet. And so he becomes a special target of the enemy.

And so we read next in chapters one and two about Satan's malice against him and his desire to destroy the man, especially to destroy his faith. It's true that Satan destroys his family and his wealth and all those things and his health. These are actually the things that some people think are the most important things.

There's even some theologies like the word of faith teaching. It almost seems to sound like wealth and health are the most important things that a man can have. But Satan in

taking this man's wealth and his health away from him is only really aiming at something more important, and that is taking Job's faith away from him.

That the things that Job goes through are trials of his faith, his faith and his loyalty to God are being tested here, as we know. And Satan's trying to destroy that in the man. In chapter two, verse 11, we see that his three friends arrive intending to comfort him.

Initially, they're so stunned by what they see in his condition that they just sit in stunned silence for seven days. And then they begin to speak. And actually, Job breaks the silence and they speak.

And and for several chapters after that, we have cycles of debate, essentially chapters three through twenty seven. These cycles of debate go like this. First of all, Job speaks, but he just laments.

He just gets sort of a soliloquy about how miserable life is and how much better it'd be not to be born. But then his friend Eliphaz, the Temanite, speaks up. And of all the friends, he's the one most gentle with Job, at least initially.

He loses patience with Job eventually, but he starts out rather sympathetic toward Job and he suggests that near the end of his little talk, that perhaps Job needs to consider that he sinned and that this is a punishment from God and that if he would just get right with God, these things would get better. Job's answer. And all of his answers suggest that he does not believe that he has committed any sin that has brought these things upon him, and that's the wrong interpretation of his situation.

However, all of his friends seem to take that interpretation. And Bildad, the Shuhite, speaks next, and then Zohar, the Nehemiathite. And these men are even more direct in saying that Job has done something wrong.

And the first cycle of debate is really each of these three men speaking and Job responding to them. And then the same three speak in the same order again. The next cycle, you've got Eliphaz, you've got Bildad, then you've got Zohar, and each time Job answers, that's the second cycle.

Then there's a third cycle that begins the same way. Eliphaz and Bildad speak, but they've pretty much exhausted their arguments. And Bildad's last speech is just a few scattered things that don't really make an argument at all, just kind of platitudes.

And Bildad's third speech is very short, and Zohar's is missing altogether. Zohar doesn't make a third speech. So these cycles involve Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zohar each making a speech and answered by Job.

There are three such cycles, but in the final cycle, Bildad's speech is very short, and Zohar is absolutely absent. And this suggests a number of things. One suggests that this

book is not an artificial production, because certainly someone writing a fictional poem story, an epic, would want to have more symmetry than that.

You'd want to have all the cycles complete. And there's no reason given why the cycles are not completed. The third cycle just appears that Bildad's running out of steam, and Zohar has already thrown up his hands in despair, and he doesn't speak anymore.

And then Job speaks for a while. His last speech is actually in chapter 27, but he gives some additional, that is his answer to his friends. But he gives additional speeches in chapters 28 through 31.

Chapter 28 is a standalone chapter that scholars recognize as a wisdom poem, which they kind of think is the central chapter of the Book of Job. That it's a poem about wisdom, and where can a man find wisdom? That's chapter 28. And then Elihu, who has been totally unmentioned previously, speaks up in chapters 32 through 37 and gives what appear to be four speeches without interruption.

And he's critical of Job and of Job's friends. It's hard to say exactly what he brings to the table that has not already been said, but his speeches are included for some reason. We'll have to examine that when we come to him.

His speech is occupied chapters 32 through 37. And then God shows up in the whirlwind and speaks from a whirlwind in chapters 38 through 41. And this is where you expect the whole thing to be resolved.

You expect for, you know, you've heard the speculations of Job's friends about what's happened to Job and why you've heard his answers. Everybody's confused. No one knows what's going on.

Finally, God shows up and talks. We think, OK, finally, God's going to reveal why Job's going through this. And he doesn't.

God doesn't reveal it. God's message essentially is, who do you think you are to expect me to have to explain my ways with you? I'm God. You're not.

And that's that's really all that Job needs. And we see him repenting in chapter 42, verses one through six. And that's the end of the poetic section.

The last parts of chapter 42 are really just covering the outcome where God blessed Job better than he'd been blessed before even. Now, we're not done with our introduction, but we do come to a place where we have to take a break. And so that's how the story shakes out.

And we'll talk about some important questions related to the book before we go right into chapter one. And we'll do that in our next session.