

OpenTheo

Job Overview (Part 1)



Bible Book Overviews - Steve Gregg

In "Job Overview (Part 1)", Steve Gregg provides insights into the book of Job, a poetic and wisdom literature book of the Old Testament. The book grapples with the theological question of why suffering exists in a world believed to be created by a benevolent God. Job's sufferings, according to Gregg, were not punishment for his supposed wrongdoings but a test of his faith and integrity by God and Satan. The book's wisdom literature, including poetry and repetition, challenges the prevailing wisdom of Job's friends that suffering always results from wrongdoing.

Transcript

For several months now, we've been having these meetings and each time taking another book of the Bible. I give a pretty thorough introduction and an overview of the book. We don't actually go verse by verse through the books.

If you like doing that, you can go to our website. I do teach all of these books verse by verse at the website, but our idea is to go through the Bible a little more rapidly this way. And we've come now to the book of Job.

We've done all the books in the Old Testament prior to this, which means all the what we call the historical books. Now, Job, I believe is historically accurate, but it's not considered one of the historical books. As you divide the books of the Old Testament into categories, Job is the first of the books that we'd normally refer to as the poetic books.

Now, it's not that it's not historical. It's just that it's written in poetry. And because it's written in poetry, it's a lot more like Psalms and Proverbs and Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon, which are also considered poetic books.

Now, when we get to the prophets, you'll find that they are also largely written in poetry, not entirely, but vast portions of the prophets, their prophecies especially, were written in poetry as well. Although we don't call them poetic books because they belong to another genre, prophetic literature, but happens to be written in poetry. These books, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon, are books that are similar to each other in some respects.

In one thing is that they're poetic, and the other thing is that most of them are what we call wisdom literature. Now, the Psalms as a whole are not necessarily referred to as wisdom literature, though many of the Psalms are examples of wisdom literature. But Job is, and Proverbs and Ecclesiastes are.

And the Song of Solomon, I don't know if we'd consider that wisdom literature or not, maybe. But certainly we have here in the middle of the Old Testament, books that belong to the class that the Hebrews called wisdom literature. And what that means is that it's philosophical.

Now, the book of Job is philosophical, and it largely contains the dialogue or discussion among five men who are definitely philosophers, Job himself being one of them. These are ancient philosophers. Now, it's not like they were professional philosophers and they didn't do anything else.

They didn't teach in a university course on philosophy or anything like that. But they probably had regular jobs, but they also were of the intelligentsia of their time, it's very clear. Job certainly was.

And the men who came to speak to him, of which there were a total of four, all of them speak sort of on his level as being as interested in philosophical questions as he is. Now, the Jews enjoyed philosophical questions. Solomon, of course, wrote the other wisdom books, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon.

And they also deal with philosophical questions, not always the deepest ones, but just dealing with the ultimate issues of life. What's right and what's wrong? What's wise, what's foolish? What makes sense, what doesn't make sense? How do things work in the world? And certainly the book of Job is that kind of a book and focuses on one philosophical question. We would call it a theological question, but theology is also philosophy, another branch of it.

So is logic. I mean, philosophy is not some kind of ethereal, speculative thing entirely. There is a lot of speculative philosophy, but I mean, logic is a category of philosophy and logic is not speculative.

It's very exact like mathematics. Theology, likewise, it's a philosophical understanding of God. Again, not necessarily speculative if you've got an authority like the word of God to guide you.

These men in the book of Job, they were theologians without a book. There was no book of the Bible written at the time that this story took place. Job didn't even have the advantage of being one of the children of Israel.

We're going to have to identify who he was, where he lived, what time he lived and so forth to get some kind of setting for the book. But the setting for the book is much less

important than the conversations in the book, which are all wrestling with the great question that all religions and all philosophers and all nominally sane and thinking and concerned people and reflective people wrestle with at some point and in some measure. And that is why is there suffering in the world if God is good? Now, everybody usually can live with the fact that some people suffer because they're bad.

They bring suffering on themselves by their bad deeds, or they might even be punished by God because of their bad deeds. None of this brings any conflict in our minds with the idea of God being just. If somebody does something that brings disaster on himself or if somebody does something that's so offensive to God that God has to respond with judgment, well, that's just the way it is.

Free will being what it is, people sometimes get themselves into trouble. But what about a man who's not doing anything wrong? A man who's not doing anything that offends God? A man who's not even doing foolish things that would normally get a man into trouble? He's not going out and gambling his money away. He's not out there, you know, spending it on booze.

He's not out there wasting and doing things that foolish people do to get into trouble. He's a good man. And yet he suffers as much as a bad man does.

And this is something that is encountered in real life in every society. And when people encounter it, they always wonder why, if God is good, why does this good man have to suffer the same as a bad man does? And we seem to think that suffering is always a punishment for evil. And one thing that the book of Job will show us is that it certainly is not.

It can be, but it's not necessarily. Suffering has other roles to play. And the book of Job is a book about suffering and the character of God, the ways of God, and how to harmonize the sufferings of a good man with the goodness of God.

And that's a great philosophical point. Every religion deals with this kind of thing. Christians, largely, probably would, if they're not thinking too deeply, I'm not saying they're thinking wrongly, but not too deeply, they might just say, well, at least there's a recompense in the next life.

If bad people don't suffer here, they'll suffer in hell when they die. If good people don't enjoy life here, if bad things happen here, at least there's a heaven they can enjoy forever and ever. Now, Job and his friends didn't know anything about that.

The Old Testament doesn't tell us anything about heaven and hell. The afterlife is simply not a focus of any part of the Old Testament. And as far as we know, God did not reveal to people in the Old Testament more than just a smidgen of awareness that there is even such a thing as an afterlife.

And so they have to deal with the subject without that Christian perspective. And yet, the book of Job, I think, suggests that it is possible to make sense of this whole subject without reference to the afterlife. Certainly, there is an afterlife.

And certainly, all wrongs are set right in the afterlife. But that's not something that comes into the picture in Job. And in many cases, we don't need to even contemplate that in order to make better sense than an unbeliever can make of our own sufferings and of the sufferings of other good people.

So, of course, Hindus and Buddhists, they have their own way of solving the problem, too. They know very well that people who apparently are good people sometimes suffer miserably. But they have karma and they have reincarnation.

And they basically say, well, these things will all be sorted out through a series of reincarnations where all the bad karma from past lifetimes is burned off from current suffering. And eventually, there'll be no more bad karma. And then everyone will be, you know, if anyone's suffering, even though they're good people, it's because they weren't good people in a previous lifetime.

No one is suffering, as Jesus put it, for righteousness. See, Jesus didn't believe in karma and reincarnation. He believed it's possible to suffer for righteousness.

He said, blessed are those who suffer for righteousness sake. But in terms of Hindu and Buddhist thought, nobody ever suffers for righteousness sake. Even if they're a righteous person, if they're suffering, it's because of sins and evil they've done in a previous lifetime.

They've got bad karma they're having to burn off with their present sufferings. They suffer because of bad things they do. And that makes pretty good philosophical sense, if only it was true.

It isn't because the Bible teaches us something else. But the book of Job is a powerful book where you see a good man struggling to understand why he's suffering when he's made every effort and quite successfully to live an exemplary good life. Now, it's not just Job who thinks he's lived a good life.

God himself says the same thing about Job. God, talking to Satan about Job, says, have you seen my servant Job? He's a good man. He's a righteous man.

He fears God. He's blameless. He avoids evil.

I mean, God gives Job highest recommendations. Now, I want to say this, that Job is a real problem to those Christians who embrace what's called the word of faith teaching. Because the word of faith teaching is that if you have enough faith and you're not at fault, then God intends for you always to be healthy and wealthy.

Now, Job lost both his wealth, of which it was considerable, and his health, but he'd done nothing wrong. And so for this theology to work, they have to find something wrong that Job did. And so they have combed through the book looking for something that would make the book of Job fit with their theology.

And what they found was in Job 3.25, where Job said, for the thing I greatly feared has come upon me. They say, see, he didn't have faith. He feared.

He feared that he'd lose his wealth. He feared that he'd lose his health, and he did, because you'll have what you say. Now, he didn't say that he'd confess that he was going to lose it.

He didn't even say that he had a conviction that he would lose it. He didn't even say he believed that he would lose it. He just, he said, these are, these circumstances are things that any man would on occasion have, you know, fear.

If he's, you know, a wealthy man, I mean, most of you here, when you contemplate growing old and maybe getting cancer, maybe getting, you know, dementia or something like that, it's scary. But the fact that you would fear it doesn't mean it's going to happen to you. It might.

You're fearing it, it's not going to make it happen, though. And you're not fearing it, it won't prevent it from happening. You don't get what you say.

You don't, you know, the things you fear don't automatically come upon you. And Job's problems did not come upon him because he feared. This is a, finding this verse as some kind of a justification for saying he didn't have faith, and therefore these things happened to him.

Therefore, that rescues the word of faith teaching from the challenge of Job. But Job, I'm afraid, challenges them more than that. Because God makes it very clear that he didn't bring these things on Job because Job feared them.

He brought them on him as a test. And the test was, would Job curse God or not if these things happened to him? Satan said yes, God said no. Job was then under the microscope.

He was going to either prove Satan right or God right. And he, it turns out he proved God right. But what's interesting about this is that after the first wave of problems came upon Job, we see that Satan came back to God because he had not gotten from Job what he wanted.

That is, he wanted Job to curse God. And he couldn't get him to do that. But God made it very clear in verse, chapter two, in verse three, he says, the Lord said to Satan, have you considered my servant Job, that there's none like him on the earth, a blameless and

upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil.

Now this is after, after these bad things happened, the first wave when all his wealth was taken from him, his children died, or at least he was told that they had died, you know, the first wave of disasters, everything except his ill health had come upon him already at this point. And God still said, he's blameless. He can't be blamed in any way for this.

This didn't come upon him because of anything he can be blamed for. In other words, it didn't happen because he had lack of faith or anything else that he might be blamed for. But more than that, he says, he's a man who is blameless and upright, who fears God and shuns evil.

Notice he says, and still he holds fast to his integrity, although you, Satan incited me, God against him to destroy him without cause. Now, what God is saying is all this came upon Job without any justification, without any cause. Job had not brought it on himself by his fearing it.

He didn't bring it on himself by any sin, including lack of faith. It came upon him without cause. That is, Job didn't give any cause for it.

This was strictly a wager being made between God and Satan of which Job was, he was in the Petri dish, you know, he was the one being examined to see how he would react. So it wasn't anything Job did before that brought these things on. It was more a concern about what he would do after.

And that's what we're going to find out, though his friends didn't understand that. Now, Job throughout the whole book knows that he did nothing to bring this on himself. And this disturbs his friends because his friends have a theological view, a lot of like, like the word of faith people.

If you got disaster, it's your fault. God is not blessing you because he's not pleased with something about you. Now, the word of faith would say he's not pleased because you don't have faith and therefore he allows these things to happen to These guys sort of got a little more extreme is that you must be doing some really evil things because look how bad things are for you.

And began to accuse him of doing lots of evil things. And his answer to them was, I, you know, I used to think that way too. He actually says that he says, I know, I know all these philosophical points you're making.

I would have said them myself. If I were in your position and someone else was in my position, he says, it's not so I haven't done it. My case proves that position is not universally correct.

Now what's interesting is as you read through the Old Testament and the Psalms,

especially on the Proverbs, you often get the impression, a good man, everything's going to go good for him. You know, God's going to smile on the righteous, the diligent man, he's going to prosper. You know, you know, if you follow wisdom, then you'll be blessed with long life and health to your bones and and great prosperity or your barns will burst with grain and so forth.

These kinds of statements are found throughout the Psalms and the Proverbs. It very much like what Job's friends and Job himself would have said before this particular story occurred. But what are we supposed to think about it? We have to understand that these kinds of statements that God blesses the righteous in material ways, and he brings curses and disaster and punishment on the wicked in equally material ways.

These are generalities. This is what wisdom literature is about. Wisdom literature is about generalities.

As you read the book of Proverbs, a classic book of Hebrew wisdom literature, you find that it's full of generalities. You know, if you live wisely, you'll live long. Well, not always.

Jesus lived pretty wisely. He didn't live long. Lots of martyrs have died young.

Stephen was fairly young when he died. No one can say he didn't live wisely. There are exceptions, but in general, a wise life avoids many of the unnecessary disasters that come upon fools and will, in all other things being equal, extend your life.

But not all other things are equal. Principles in the book of Proverbs are typical of Hebrew wisdom literature, and so is the idea that Job's friends have, that if you're good, it'll go well for you. I mean, in Proverbs, you'll find statements like, you know, a soft answer turns away wrath, but it doesn't always.

If someone's angry at you and you answer softly, it'll probably make them less angry, but it might not. Sometimes it doesn't. You know, a diligent man will be made rich.

Well, some people work very, very hard and they never get rich because they live in the third world or something, you know. Or people in the United States, sometimes they hardly work at all and they're richer than 90% of people in the world. These are generalities.

In general, if you work hard, it'll tend toward making you richer. If you're lazy, it'll tend to make you less rich. But if you're lazy and you win the lottery, that's another story.

Or if you're lazy and your wealthy parents die and leave you a fortune, then that's... I mean, lazy people sometimes do get rich, and very hard-working people sometimes never get rich. These Proverbs... Wisdom literature is not saying, here's a promise from God. These are not promises from God.

They're observations of the way things usually go. Generally speaking, God blesses good people, and wise living avoids trouble. But... Except when it doesn't.

And that's what we have to understand with wisdom literature. Whenever it makes one of these sweeping statements, it is true that this is so, except when it isn't. And Job's story is one of those, except when it isn't.

Generally speaking, God favors and blesses righteous people. At least this was his promise in the Old Testament. Sometimes he does things a little differently in the New Testament.

But in the Old Testament, for example, in the law, of which Job had no connection with because he wasn't a Jew, but in the law of Moses, there are lots of promises. If you keep my covenant, then you'll be blessed in your farm, you'll be blessed in your wife's womb, you won't miscarry babies, you'll be healthy, you'll have no drought, your enemies won't invade you. And that was true.

And he said, but if you don't obey God, all these bad things will happen to you. And that was true too. But God's dealings are not always predictably that way.

And this book of Job is there as a very important piece of wisdom, which is to say, except for the exceptions. These things are generally true. And if you want to live a good life, in general, pursue righteousness and wisdom and those things.

And that's more likely to give you a good life than ignoring those things. But even if you do pursue what's right and wise, there are times when you'll be under God's test. There are times when he'll allow disasters to happen, but they won't be because you weren't living righteously.

They are to test you to see if you'll still live righteously when things aren't going well. That's the test. It's not because of what Job did.

And when you suffer and you've done nothing right, it's not because of something you did. It's because of God and Satan having a different opinion among themselves as to what you will do in those circumstances. And that's what the big question that confuses both Job and his friends in this book are.

Now, let me give you some background. I said this is wisdom literature. It's poetic literature.

The next several books are to be poetic books. Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, they're all poetic books. And some of them are wisdom literature also.

Especially Proverbs and Ecclesiastes stand out in the Old Testament as the most, besides Job, the most wisdom-dominated literature in the Old Testament. It's also poetry. Now, I

said that this was poetry, and so is most of the, most of the oracles of the prophets in the Bible are poetry as well.

What is Hebrew poetry like? Well, you don't recognize Hebrew poetry from maybe the conventions you would find in English poetry. Classically, English poetry is characterized by rhyme, lines that end with the same sound that correspond to each other. Meter also, you know, similar number of syllables or beats in a line with those of the corresponding lines.

Meter, rhyme, these are important features of English poetry. They're not important features of Hebrew poetry. The principal thing that made this poetry sound pleasant to the Hebrew ear was the ability to say the same thing twice or three times in different ways.

Repetition was often for emphasis, but it's often also just for aesthetic pleasure to the ear. Now, you can see this simply by opening to any page at random in the Psalms, any page at random in Proverbs, or frankly, any page at random in Job, except for the first two chapters. And you'll find it's poetry, and not every line exhibits this trait, but one of the key things you'll find more than almost any other characteristic in them is repetition.

And this is what you need to understand. To the Hebrew ear, this repetition had a pleasantness about it, just like rhyme does to us. If you like poetry, if you like English poetry, it's because saying something in poetry is aesthetically different than saying it in prose.

The way that lines can be made to rhyme and the whole sound of the way the whole thing goes, there's something in our English brains that has been conditioned to like that. And in the Hebrew brain, repetition is what they've been conditioned to like. And so you'll find that's the main feature of Hebrew poetry.

Now, the first two chapters of Job are not in poetry. They're simply prose. There's a few poetic sections.

For example, Job 121, when Job gives his first little response to his sufferings at the beginning. He says, naked came I from my mother's womb and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away.

Blessed be the name of the Lord. This is kind of a little poetic verse here. But most of chapter one and chapter two are simply a narration, just like you'd find in the historical books.

However, when you turn to chapter three and Job begins to speak, unless you're looking at a King James version. And the reason I say that is the King James version sets the type differently than all the other versions do. A King James version just has each verse is a block, just like a paragraph of itself.

That's just how they laid out the type in the King James. Modern translations, including the new King James, make a difference between paragraphs that are in prose and those that are in verse. And if you have any version other than the King James front of you, you can look and see how that chapters one and two, they're just set in block type like paragraphs.

But in chapter three, verse three and following, you see it's not like that. It's like laid out in verse. Now, of course, the Hebrew text doesn't lay it out in verse like this, but the Hebrew scholars who translate the new translations, they recognize verse and they print it out in verse for you, for your benefit, so that you'll recognize, okay, this is poetry.

And you'll find that this poetic section of Job remains poetic all the way to the last chapter, which is chapter 42, until you get to verse six. Chapter two, verse six is the end of the poetic section. And then from verse seven to the end of the chapter through 17, it's prose again.

So Job, the first two chapters are prose, and the last 11 verses are prose. All the rest that's in between is poetry. And the part that's poetry are the speeches.

Job speaks in poetry, his friends speak in poetry, even when God speaks up, he speaks in poetry. Now, one of the questions in the book, Job, we have to ask, do these people really talk this way? Or has somebody who was there and knew the content of speech later written the book as an aesthetic, poetic book and rephrase their statements in poetic form? That's a possibility. We don't know who wrote the book of Job.

That's one of the unanswerables about it. We don't know who wrote the book of Job. Some people think Elihu wrote it.

Now, he was not one of the first three friends, but the fourth guy who speaks up. And he seems to speak up as if he's the prophet of God. He says, the spirit of the Lord is on me.

I'm speaking, you know, I've got the truth here. You guys didn't know what you're talking about, but I do. And some people have thought Elihu is like the prophet of God.

Other people think he's just an arrogant young man. And, you know, there are different views about Elihu, but some have suggested Elihu may have been inspired and may have written the book. He was after all there.

He heard everything and he could have written it down, including his own speeches. We don't know. There's other theories.

The view of one of the ancient Jewish sources and of some of the church fathers was that Moses wrote it. Now, Job's story would have been probably shortly before the lifetime of Moses. And if it was known to Moses, he might have written it.

There's no reason he couldn't have, although Moses didn't write quite so much poetry, generally speaking. In Deuteronomy, Moses wrote a few songs and poems, but I mean, a whole book of poetry, it's not Moses' typical style. But we couldn't rule out that Moses may have written it.

Some Jewish rabbis and Martin Luther, the reformer, and the church father, Gregory of Nazianzen, all believe that Solomon wrote it. And probably the reason for that is that Solomon wrote the other wisdom literature that's in our Bible. And he liked to write that when he wrote poetry.

And so because it's wisdom literature written in poetry in the Hebrew language, I guess Luther and others thought maybe Solomon wrote this book as well. Now, Solomon wrote it. He was writing about a story that happened a long time before his time, because Job lived between the time of Abraham and the time of Moses, which is very early.

Many scholars, at least the conservative ones, believe Job's the oldest book in the Bible, which is why I said that Job and his friends didn't have a Bible to inform them. All of their theological speculations, all of their philosophizing came just out of what they had reasoned to be so and what seemed like it must be so. But they didn't have any revelation in terms of written record of prophets or anything like that, like later writers had.

So Job, the fact that he could go through this and still trust God without even having a Bible, he didn't have a promise from the Bible anywhere, like you do. When you're going through trials, you pull out the Psalms, you pull out your favorite promises of the Bible and say, okay, we have this assurance from God because he said it. God said, I believe that that settles it.

Well, you can do that, but Job couldn't do that. He just had his ideas about God, whom he worshipped, and his friends had similar ideas about God, and his experience didn't bear it out. He thought God would not allow a righteous man to suffer horrendous disasters.

His experience proved otherwise. And so, I mean, it's hard enough when you have a Bible and you believe in the Bible and your experience doesn't seem to bear out what you were led to believe from the promises of God might be expected in your life. At least you have the Bible.

At that point, you've got tension between your experience and what God has actually said. In Job's case, it was tension between his experience and what he had only speculated about God previously because unless he'd had some personal revelations from God, which is a possibility, but still he was very much confused by his present circumstances. Some liberal scholars think that this book may have been written by a later prophet like Jeremiah only because when Job begins to speak in chapter three and curses the day of his birth, Jeremiah has a couple of passages in his book, one in

Jeremiah 15, one in Jeremiah 20, where he actually curses the day of his birth also.

But apart from the fact that both Jeremiah and Job cursed the day of their birth, there's really nothing else to point in the direction of Jeremiah being the author. And I don't think there's any merit in that particular theory. Now, let me just say, since most of this is wisdom literature, there are obviously many people who said, well, maybe this isn't really a historical story at all.

Maybe this fictional character Job was made up to give a framework to present all these philosophical points and counterpoints of these speakers. Maybe it's all fiction. Well, it would not be impossible for a devout Jew to write such a fictional book and place such things in it.

In fact, we have Jews wrote fictional stories that are found in what we call the apocryphal books written between the Old and the New Testament. Is Job a true story or is it fiction? Well, I think from statements both in the Old and the New Testament, we should probably understand it as it's not fiction. It's nonfiction.

It's a true story. In Ezekiel chapter 14, God is telling Ezekiel that he's going to wipe out Jerusalem. And even if Jerusalem, like Sodom, had had a few righteous in it, Sodom would have been spared if there were 10 righteous.

But Jerusalem, even if it has very righteous people, it will never be spared. If there are righteous people in Jerusalem, he's saying they'll get away alive, but the city's still going down. There's no righteousness of any individuals in Jerusalem that would save it from doom.

And he gives this example in Ezekiel 14 and verse 14. God says, though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness, says the Lord God. Now, I don't think there's any reason to be uncertain about this.

Noah was regarded as a historical character by the Jews and by Christians too. Daniel was not only historical, he was contemporary. Daniel and Ezekiel lived at the same time in the same country, Babylon.

No one can doubt that Daniel was being spoken of as a real person. And to say, if these three people were there, Noah, Daniel, and Job, and if God meant the first two, they're real guys, Job, he's like a fictional character. That'd be very misleading.

Certainly, Job is described as a truly righteous man on the same footing with Noah and Daniel. And therefore, it would appear that Ezekiel, under inspiration, was giving the impression that Job is a historical story, not just a parable or something like that. Likewise, in the book of James in chapter 5, now getting the New Testament witness on this, in verses 10 and 11, James 5, 10 and 11, James says, my brethren, take the

prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord as an example of suffering, affliction, and 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's saying, if you're going through trials, remember others who've been through trials as examples for you to follow.

The prophets, for example, they suffered in the name of the Lord. Think of Job. You've heard about his patience and you've seen how good God was with him.

Now, if James and his readers thought that Job was a fictional character, that doesn't give me any comfort in my real sufferings in real life, that some guy that somebody made up was represented as being very patient under trial. And then in the story that was equally made up, God was shown to be very good to him anyway. I mean, a made up story is not a very comforting foundation for my expectations about reality in real world suffering.

Now he mentions the prophets, and no one doubts that they were real people. That Job is mentioned along with the prophets as an example of someone who suffered faithfully and was patient, and God blessed them, shows that both James and Ezekiel, and therefore I think we would say the Jews and the Christians of biblical times, understood Job to be a real person. And therefore I always have, and I probably always will.

Okay, so what is the time frame of the book of Job? And for that matter, the geography. He has said, if you look at how he's introduced in Job 1.1, there was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job. That man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and shunned evil.

And he had a lot of sons and daughters, 10 children all together. Now he was a man of the east. We're going to see in verse 3 at the end it says, because of his livestock numbering as much as they were, he was the greatest of all the people of the east.

Now this book was written in Hebrew by Jewish people or for Jewish people, and the east to their mind would mean the east of Israel. Now east of Israel is the land that we would call Jordan today. Also Arabia's east of Israel.

And notably in Old Testament times, Edom was east of Israel, southeast. Now there's a lot of reasons to identify Job with the nation of Edom as an Edomite, a probable Edomite. For one thing, he's in the land of Uz.

Well, what does that tell us? What is Uz? Well, Uz was one of the sons of Nahor, who was a brother of Abraham. Now the Edomites also came from Abraham, from his grandson, Esau, who was also called Edom. But these people would be related, and Uz was the person that the land was named after.

In the Bible, that's generally the case. Lands are named after people. In fact, the land of Israel is named after Israel, a man, Jacob.

His name was Israel. You know, this is true of a lot of the lands in the Bible. Cain went off into the land of Nahor, he built a city, and he named it after his son.

The city was named after his son. And so this is not uncommon. Shechem, the city of Shechem, was named after Shechem, the prince.

And so the land of Uz was no doubt named after Uz. There's two people in Uz known in the Bible. One is the son of Nahor, and therefore nephew of Abraham.

The other was one of the sons of Aram, mentioned in Genesis chapter 10 and verse 23. And Aram was the Syrians. So this Uz who started, who's after whom the land of Uz is named, we don't know which one it was.

But Middle Eastern, either related to Abraham or not related, but to the east of Abraham's people. Edom is the region that it's probably at. Largely, we see this because in Lamentations chapter 4, which is a little tiny book sandwiched between the book of Jeremiah and the book of Ezekiel, put there because it is to be written by Jeremiah.

Chapter 4, verse 21 of Lamentations, it says, Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, and you who dwell in the land of Uz. This is poetic parallelism. The daughters of the land of Edom, those who dwell in Uz, are the same people.

And so Uz and Edom seem to be coextensive. Uz might have been a smaller region within the broader realm of Edom. But we know that some of Job's friends were probably Edomites.

For example, Eliphaz the Temanite. Well, Teman was descended from Esau. The Bible tells us that he was one of Esau's offspring.

And therefore the Temanites would be named after him and they'd be Edomites. And Eliphaz, one of the first of Job's friends to speak, was a Temanite. So he's an Edomite of the branch of Teman, the family of Teman.

One of the sons, Bildad the Shuhite, Shuhites were descended from Shua, who is actually one of Abraham's sons by Keturah. When we think of Abraham's sons, we usually think of Isaac and Ishmael. But we forget that Abraham married again a woman named Keturah and had six more sons.

He had eight sons, not two. And one of the sons he had by Keturah was Shua and the Shuhites were from them. So you can see that these tribes that are one way or another kind of related to Abraham, either from his nephews or from his sons or from someone else close to him.

This is the people that populated that region. So the region is east of Israel, probably in Edom. Job was probably an Edomite.

In fact, interestingly, some versions of the Septuagint have identified Job with Jobab, who is one of the Edomite kings. If you look at Genesis 36, we have a listing of the descendants of Esau and also a list of the kings that came from Esau or the rulers of this people. And in Genesis 36-31, it says, Now these were the kings who reigned in the land of Edom.

That's Esau's descendants before any king reigned in Israel. As you read down, you see in verse 33, And when Bela died, Jobab, the son of Zerah of Bozrah, reigned in his place. Now, Jobab was the second Edomite king.

According to the Septuagint, the opinion is expressed by someone who put together the Septuagint that Jobab is another name for Job. The name Job, which is a tested, it's a Canaanite name originally, attested from many ancient sources. It means, Where is father? Now, what's interesting about Job is that was the big question that Job had through all of it.

Where's dad? Where's God? You know, he's supposed to be protecting me. Where'd he go? Where's father? That's what the word Job means. Where's father? It's a Canaanite word.

But it's thought perhaps that Jobab was his earlier name, or that later he became king and was named Jobab based on the name Job. But in any case, we may never know that. The timing of Job's life, however, seems to go, I believe it has to be placed somewhere in the time that the Israelites were enslaved under Pharaoh.

There were hundreds of years after Joseph brought his family into Egypt and before Moses came and delivered them from Egypt. During those years of captivity, that has to be pretty much the time that we're talking about. Let me give you some reasons.

First of all, the lifespan of Job in chapter 42, verse 16, it is said that after these trials happened, he lived another 140 years. Now, we don't know how old he was when these things happened, but at a time not very much earlier than this, people were living to be as much as 500 years old. Abraham himself only lived to be 175.

Moses lived to be 120 and so forth. The ages were declining. The age of Job, whatever it was ultimately at the end, was similar to ages during the patriarchal period as opposed to an earlier time when people lived to be many hundreds of years old or a later time when people lived to be less than 100 years old.

So he apparently was in the patriarchal times. His wealth was measured in livestock. You'll see that in chapter 1, verse 3 and again in chapter 42, verse 12.

He is a wealthy man. How do you know? Because he had so many camels and sheep and oxen and so forth, you know, not in gold and silver. He may have had gold and silver too, but a man's wealth during patriarchal times was measured in his livestock because he was probably like most of the people of the East, probably a Bedouin, probably a nomadic guy who took his, you know, animals around to pasture in different places, just like there are Bedouins are today and many of the people were.

But we also see that one of the groups of people that took some of his livestock were the Chaldeans in chapter 1, verse 17. At a later time than this, Chaldeans were a settled people who were identified largely with the Babylonians. But at this time, the Chaldeans were apparently raiding bands, you know, wandering about in the desert and stealing people's animals and things like that.

This would be a very early time, earlier than the settlement of the Chaldeans in the Babylonian area, apparently. Also, I mentioned that one of his friends was a Shuhite and Shua was a son of Abraham and it would probably be more than a generation after Shua's death that people would be called Shuhites. So a few generations after Abraham, probably.

Likewise, one of them was a Temanite. Now, Teman was four generations removed from Abraham. For people to be called Temanites would probably take a couple of generations after that.

This would be about six generations after Abraham. Or, in other words, about two generations after Joseph and his brothers, placing the timing probably within the Egyptian captivity of Israel. Now, it was before the Exodus, we have reason to believe.

Because there's no reference to a tabernacle, there's no reference to Levites, there's no reference to any of the religious establishment that God established with Israel after the Exodus. Now, we might say, but he was an Edomite, so he wouldn't have any dealings with them. But he was a man of God.

He knew Yahweh. He knew the name Yahweh and he uses the term Yahweh several times. But that's the God of the Israelites.

That's the name of the Israelite God. If he was acquainted with Yahweh, he'd probably be acquainted with the Levitical priesthood and the tabernacle after that was established. Instead, we have him doing what people did before that time.

A father being like the household priest, offering sacrifices on a family altar for his sons. We read about this, that he would regularly... He had 10 children. And on their birthdays, he would set up an altar and offer sacrifices for them in case they had sinned in their hearts, he said.

But for a father to offer sacrifices for his family means there wasn't a priesthood or a

tabernacle or a central altar to do this at. This is what Abraham did. This is what Isaac did.

This is what Jacob did. They all set up family altars too. All the culture, all the religious culture of Job's time is agreeable with the patriarchal period, which is a time from Abraham till the time of Moses.

And since it's at least six generations after Abraham, that would put it during the Egyptian captivity of Israel. And yet, without any reference to Levites or the tabernacle, I think that seems to place it before the Exodus, it would seem. Now, the name Job is known from outside the Bible.

There's a prince of Ashtaroth in Bashan, who's mentioned in the Armana tablets from around the middle of the 14th century BC. That'd be around the time of Moses. Job could have lived right around the time of Moses, and he could have been this Job that's known from the Armana tablets.

There's also a Palestinian chief mentioned in an Egyptian text around the time of Abraham, 2000 BC, but that'd be too early for Job. This Job would be a different Job. We're going to take a break at this point, and then we're going to go through the book of Job and make some of the lessons from it that we need to get from it.