

JOB

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BACKGROUND

Job is the first of five OT books of poetry—first in both canonical and historical order. With a date as early as 2000 B.C. (the time of Abraham), Job may be the Bible's oldest book. It tells the story of Job, a righteous and wealthy man whom God allowed Satan to tempt through great suffering. Though poetic in form, Job, like the other biblical books of poetry, is firmly rooted in history. Both Ezekiel ([Ezekiel 14:14, 20](#)) and James ([James 5:10-11](#)) considered Job a historical person.

AUTHOR

Unknown. Some believe Moses was the author, due to the early date and the vocabulary similar to the Pentateuch (see [Comparison with Other Bible Books](#)). But there is no solid evidence for this.

DATE

The early date (2000 B.C.) is suggested by such things as

- the patriarchal lifestyle seen in the book;
- the use of the ancient patriarchal name for God (*El Shaddai*, "the Almighty," used 31 times);
- the absence of any mention of Israelite history.

LOCATION

Though the "land of Uz" ([Job 1:1](#)) is clearly outside of Israel (perhaps northern Arabia), the style and vocabulary of the Hebrew writing, as well as the mention of the Jordan River ([Job 40:23](#)), suggest that the book was written in Israel for an Israelite audience.

PURPOSE

- To address the question of why innocent people suffer.
- To promote faith and trust in God, whose ways are higher than those of humankind ([Job 42:1-5](#); see [Isaiah 55:9](#)).

UNIQUE FEATURES

- Because of its focus on human suffering, Job has a unique appeal to people of all religions.
- Job, like Zechariah, gives a brief glimpse of confrontations between heavenly beings.

- Job is the only biblical book to refer to what may have been dinosaurs (Hebrew "behemoth" and "Leviathan," [Job 40:15](#); [Job 41:1](#)).

COMPARISON WITH OTHER BIBLE BOOKS

Genesis:

- Job's description of earth's early history ([Job 38:4-11](#)) provides a complementary parallel to [Genesis 1](#).
- Both use the Hebrew expression for "sons of God" ([Job 2](#); [Genesis 6](#)).
- The ancient patriarchal name for God, *El Shaddai* ("the Almighty"), occurs in Genesis and Job more than in any other biblical books.

Ecclesiastes:

- Job explores the meaning of suffering; Ecclesiastes explores the meaning of life.

OUTLINE

- I. CRITICISMS FROM SATAN ([Job 1-2](#))
 1. Job introduced ([Job 1:1-5](#))
 2. Satan's accusations ([Job 1:6-12](#))
 - C. Job's tragedy; his reaction ([Job 1:13-22](#))
 - D. More accusations from Satan ([Job 2:1-6](#))
 - E. More tragedy for Job; his wife and friends react ([Job 2:7-13](#))
- II. CONVERSATIONS WITH FRIENDS: CYCLE 1 ([Job 3-14](#))
 - A. Job's lament ([Job 3](#))
 - B. Eliphaz speaks ([Job 4-5](#))
 - C. Job's response ([Job 6-7](#))
 - D. Bildad speaks ([Job 8](#))
 - E. Job's response ([Job 9-10](#))
 - F. Zophar speaks ([Job 11](#))
 - G. Job's response ([Job 12-14](#))
- III. CONVERSATIONS WITH FRIENDS: CYCLE 2 ([Job 15-21](#))

- A. Eliphaz speaks ([Job 15](#))
 - B. Job's response ([Job 16-17](#))
 - C. Bildad speaks ([Job 18](#))
 - D. Job's response ([Job 19](#))
 - E. Zophar speaks ([Job 20](#))
 - F. Job's response ([Job 21](#))
- IV. CONVERSATIONS WITH FRIENDS: CYCLE 3 ([Job 22-31](#))
- A. Eliphaz speaks ([Job 22](#))
 - B. Job's response ([Job 23-24](#))
 - C. Bildad speaks ([Job 25](#))
 - D. Job's response ([Job 26-31](#))
- V. DISSERTATION BY ELIHU ([Job 32-37](#))
- A. Elihu denounces Job and his friends ([Job 32-33](#))
 - B. Elihu refutes Job's complaints ([Job 34-35](#))
 - C. Elihu defends God ([Job 36-37](#))
- VI. CONFRONTATION WITH GOD ([Job 38:1-42:6](#))
- A. God's questions for Job ([Job 38:1-40:2](#))
 - B. Job's response ([Job 40:3-5](#))
 - C. More questions for Job ([Job 40:6-41:34](#))
 - D. Job's response ([Job 42:1-6](#))
- VII. CONSIDERATION FROM GOD ([Job 42:7-17](#))
- A. Spiritual restoration ([Job 42:7-9](#))
 - B. Material restoration ([Job 42:10-17](#))

TIMELINE

2090 B.C.:	Call of Abraham
c. 2007? B.C.:	Job
1805 B.C.:	Death of Joseph, end of Genesis

Job 1:1-5 *Job's faith, family, and fortune.* Job was a wealthy man, blessed with a large and happy family. He had seven sons, which in the Bible signifies completeness (see [Job 2:13](#), [Job 42:8](#), [13](#)). The writer emphasized Job's "blameless" character ([Job 1:1](#), [5](#)), making it clear at the outset that the suffering he would soon endure was not the result of his own sin.

Job 1:6-12 *Hell challenges heaven.* Satan appeared before the Lord and accused Job of serving God only because of the earthly benefits of doing so ([Job 1:9-11](#)). God gave Satan permission to bring suffering into Job's life, with the only limitation being that he could not bring physical harm on Job himself ([Job 1:12](#)).

Satan appears elsewhere in Scripture as one who makes accusations against believers (see [Zech. 3:1-4](#); [Rev. 12:10](#)). Though he rebelled against God and was cast out of heaven (see [Isaiah 14:12-15](#); [Ezekiel 28:12-19](#)), Satan apparently still has access to heaven as one of the angels (or "sons of God," [Job 1:6](#), KJV, NKJV, NASB), which in this context probably included both good and evil angels.

Job 1:13-19 *Total disaster in one day!* By means of human enemies and natural disasters, Job lost all his wealth and children.

Job 1:20-22 *"Blessed be the name of the Lord."* Job responded to his catastrophic tragedy with great sorrow, but also with an attitude of worship and unquestioning faith in God.

Job 2:1-8 *Can his faith survive physical suffering?* Disappointed that Job remained faithful to God, and convinced that just a little more suffering would defeat him, Satan asked permission to cause bodily suffering to Job himself. God allowed him to do so, as long as the suffering was not fatal. Shortly thereafter, Job contracted a skin disease.

Job 2:9-10 *His helpmate is no help.* Job's wife, full of great sorrow herself, was unable to give Job any moral support. Rather, she invited him to share her bitterness toward God.

Job 2:11-13 *Job's three friends: They come to comfort; they stay to condemn.* Three of Job's friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, came to visit him, hoping to offer some comfort in his grief. So great was their own grief upon seeing his suffering firsthand that they sat with him for an entire week without uttering a word. Though this silent empathy was admirable, their attitude would soon change.

Job 3:1-26 *JOB: "Why was I born? Why don't I die?"* With forceful poetic words, Job openly wished he had never been born, or that he could have been stillborn or died in infancy. Considering his painful and useless life, Job wondered, why didn't God just let him die ([Job 3:20-26](#))?

Job 4:1-11 *ELIPHAZ: "The innocent don't suffer, therefore . . ."* Having listened to Job's anguish, Eliphaz offered a response. Acknowledging Job's stature as a spiritual leader ([Job 4:3-4](#)), he expressed

his conviction that truly innocent people simply do not suffer as Job was suffering ([Job 4:7](#)), while evil people do suffer ([Job 4:8-11](#))—implying that Job was suffering because of sin.

[Job 4:12-21](#) *"And how could you be innocent anyway?"* Eliphaz went on to tell of a "truth" he learned during a dream: If even the angels in heaven are not totally innocent, how could any human expect to be innocent? Again, the implication was that Job was suffering because of sin.

[Job 5:1-16](#) *"Here's what I would do."* Having noted the futility of complaining about suffering ([Job 5:1-5](#)), and having expressed again his belief that suffering results from sin ([Job 5:6-7](#)), Eliphaz urged Job to repent and turn to God ([Job 5:8-16](#)).

[Job 5:17-27](#) *"Don't despise his discipline."* Eliphaz promised Job that if he would simply accept his suffering as discipline from God, he would eventually be restored to health and prosperity. While this is a valid principle (see [Hebrews 12:5-11](#)), Eliphaz was wrong in applying it to Job's situation.

[Job 6:1-13](#) *JOB'S RESPONSE: "How can you know my sorrow?"* Job responded by noting that even his bitter complaint ([Job 3](#)) did not do justice to the depth of his personal suffering. He had as much right to complain as an animal deprived of its food ([Job 6:5-7](#)). Death was his only remaining hope ([Job 6:8-13](#)).

[Job 6:14-21](#) *Friends as dependable as dry rivers.* Job had hoped for comfort from his friends. Instead he got condemnation. They were like dried-up streams, from which a weary traveler expects water but gets only disappointment.

[Job 6:22-30](#) *"Show me where I'm wrong!"* Job had not asked his friends for physical or financial help, only for their sympathy. Now he asked them simply to be specific in their accusations: What specific sin had brought on his suffering?

[Job 7:1-21](#) *His pain and his protest.* Job saw no prospect of an end to his pain. There was no time when he could get rest from it. All hope had vanished like the clouds. Therefore, he would make his protest to God ([Job 7:11](#)): Why was God harassing him? Why did he frighten him with bad dreams? Why was he constantly testing him? If Job had sinned, why didn't God simply forgive him and leave him alone?

[Job 8:1-7](#) *BILDAD: "Words like the blowing wind."* Bildad, the second friend to speak, accused Job of speaking irresponsibly. How could he possibly make such claims about his own righteousness in light of God's perfection? While Bildad's opening remarks had truth in them, he was operating under the same false premise as Eliphaz: that Job had brought his suffering on himself by his own sin.

[Job 8:8-22](#) *Shackles for the sinner, rewards for the righteous.* Bildad argued on the basis of history ([Job 8:8-10](#)) and nature ([Job 8:11-19](#)) that sin always brings punishment. The only possible conclusion was that God helps the righteous but not the wicked ([Job 8:20-22](#)). Again, the implication was that Job must be guilty of some sin and should consider repenting.

Job 9:1-13 *JOB'S RESPONSE: "You're right: Mere man can't argue with the Almighty."* Job acknowledged the truth of Bildad's assertion that sinful humans shouldn't question God. He offered eloquent proof of God's wisdom and power.

Job 9:14-31 *"Even the sinless can't stand before him."* While claiming to be blameless ([Job 9:21](#)), Job admitted that God could and would judge him anyway. Still, the misery of his present condition made him feel hopeless, and he began to claim outright that God was unfair ([Job 9:22-24](#)).

Job 9:32-35 *Help wanted: Someone to mediate.* Job longed for a mediator to intercede with God on his behalf (see [Job 19:25](#)). The NT shows that Christ was such a mediator (see [1 Tim. 2:5](#)).

Job 10:1-22 *Created for condemnation?* Job longed to know a reason for his suffering, thinking perhaps that such understanding would make it more palatable. He reminded God that his present suffering was inconsistent with the great care God had shown in creating him ([Job 10:8-17](#)). He wondered why God had allowed him to be born if he knew he would one day suffer like this ([Job 10:18-22](#)).

Job 11:1-12 *ZOPHAR: "How dare you talk to him that way!"* Job's third friend, Zophar, was abhorred by the way Job had been talking to God. He wished that God would appear to respond to Job's foolishness and show Job that he deserved *more* judgment than he was currently receiving ([Job 11:5-6](#))!

Job 11:13-20 *My counsel: "Confess your sins!"* Zophar's advice to Job was similar to that of Eliphaz and Bildad: Repent of your sin and seek God's forgiveness. Though all three comforters urged Job to admit his sins and repent, none of them had identified just what his sin might be.

Job 12:1-12 *JOB'S RESPONSE: "A bunch of know-it-alls!"* Job's response to Zophar was actually a response to all three friends. In satirical language, he noted their pride in believing that they possessed such high knowledge. He was offended by their condescending attitude and considered himself as qualified as they in such matters ([Job 12:3-6](#)). In fact, said Job, even animals are capable of knowing such things!

The condescending attitude of Job's friends can sometimes be seen in those who try to comfort others based on doctrinal knowledge rather than feelings of mercy.

Job 12:13-25 *"But God is omniscient and omnipotent."* Only God is omniscient and omnipotent, said Job. Therefore, he is the only one competent to give full answers about sin, suffering, and justice.

Job 13:1-12 *The smartest option? Silence!* Considering God's omniscience and omnipotence, said Job, his so-called comforters would do well to remain silent. They should not try to speak for God. In fact, Job seemed to expect God to judge them for doing so ([Job 13:10-11](#))—as he eventually did ([Job 42:7-9](#)).

Job 13:13-19 *"I'm right, so I'll defend myself."* Job expressed faith in God, even if the current sickness was meant for his death ([Job 13:15](#)). Still, he expected that God would fully vindicate him ([Job 13:15-16](#)). This section resembles a courtroom scene in which Job is pleading before the Judge.

[Job 13:20-25](#) *"Only spare me from these two things . . ."* Job felt that he could get a fair hearing before God, if only God would spare him of two things: the continued presence of his judging hand; and the overwhelming awareness of his majesty.

[Job 13:26-28](#) *God's "bitter" book.* Job wondered if perhaps God was punishing him for sins committed long ago in his youth, presumably sins he had already dealt with (see [Job 1:5](#)). The grand heights of [Job 13:15](#) appear to have given way to a fit of depression and pessimism.

[Job 14:1-6](#) *Few days, full of futility.* Job acknowledged the transitory nature of human life, its difficulties, and its impurity. In light of such human frailty, couldn't God turn away his judging hand and let him rest during his few remaining days?

[Job 14:7-22](#) *"Will I ever be like a tree?"* If a tree is cut down, said Job, its roots can bring it back to life; but humans are not like that—once dead, they will never return to life ([Job 14:10-12](#)). Job acknowledged the possibility of life after death ([Job 14:14-15](#)) but didn't hold out much hope of actually seeing it. Later, in a more optimistic mood, Job would return to the question of [Job 14:14](#) (see [Job 19:25-27](#)).

[Job 15:1-16](#) *ELIPHAZ: "You're a windbag, not a wise man."* Eliphaz spoke again, castigating Job as a speaker of empty words. In Eliphaz's view, a wise man would not continue to maintain his innocence against all the evidence of judgment in his life.

[Job 15:17-35](#) *"The sages of the ages say the sinful suffer!"* Eliphaz asserted that wise people throughout history have believed that sin brings suffering. He cited several examples of such suffering. Of course he was doing much more than just giving a history lesson. His example of the loss of wealth ([Job 15:29](#)), for instance, betrays his real motive: to suggest once again that Job himself is suffering because of sin.

Contrary to Eliphaz's view, the Bible teaches that wealth is not always a blessing (see [Luke 16:19-31](#); [James 5:1-6](#)).

[Job 16:1-17](#) *JOB'S RESPONSE: "You call yourselves comforters?"* Job's reply to Eliphaz showed his strong disgust: his so-called friends were not comforters at all. It would be easy for him to criticize as they were doing. If the tables were turned, however, he would comfort rather than criticize ([Job 16:5](#)). Though he continued to complain about his friends' misguided counsel, Job was apparently most angry with God himself ([Job 16:11-14](#)).

[Job 16:18-22](#) *An advocate in heaven?* For a second time, and seemingly with more conviction, Job longed for a mediator to represent him before God (see exposition on [§Job 9:32-35](#) and [§Job 19:23-29](#)).

[Job 17:1-9](#) *"The wrong will fail, the right prevail!"* Expecting to die soon, Job continued to proclaim his innocence. His three friends, on the other hand, had shown their own unrighteousness by failing to be properly appalled by his predicament ([Job 17:8](#)).

Job 17:10-16 *"Death is my only hope."* Job's friends had said there was hope for Job if he would repent of the sin that had supposedly brought his suffering. Job, knowing that there was no such sin, continued to see death as his only release.

Job 18:1-21 *BILDAD: "Let's be logical: Only sinners suffer."* Bildad began his second speech by wondering aloud if Job would ever stop talking. He dismissed as illogical Job's self-centered view of his suffering, and his remarks that brute beasts knew as much as his three friends ([Job 12:3-12](#)). Echoing Eliphaz's second speech, Bildad cited a series of misfortunes that come upon the wicked—insinuating once again that Job had sinned.

Job 19:1-12 *JOB'S RESPONSE: "You're unfair, and so is he!"* Job accused his friends of continued cruelty and unfairness. He went on to accuse God of unfairness, giving his own list of misfortunes based on his own suffering ([Job 19:6-12](#)).

Job 19:13-22 *Forsaken by family and friends.* Job cried out in loneliness, observing that his family, close friends and acquaintances, young children, and servants had all forsaken him. On top of that, his own physical suffering continued. Because of these things, he pleaded for pity from his friends ([Job 19:21-22](#)).

Job 19:23-29 *"I know that my Redeemer lives!"* From his valley of despair, Job went to the mountaintop of faith, expressing his confidence that redemption would surely come (see exposition on [§Job 16:18-22](#)). Seen in the context of God's complete revelation, Job's Redeemer is

- his personal Redeemer ("my," [Job 19:25](#))
- a living Redeemer ([Job 19:25](#)), foreshadowing Christ's resurrection
- the one who would, in accordance with the law, pay the price for Job's deliverance ([Job 19:25](#); see [Leviticus 25:25-55](#))
- a Redeemer who will be on the earth in the last days ([Job 19:25](#)), foreshadowing Christ's second coming
- the basis for Job's personal hope of life beyond the grave ([Job 19:26](#); see exposition on [§Isaiah 26:1-19](#))
- the one through whom God will eventually vindicate Job ([Job 19:27](#); see [Job 42:10-17](#))

Having proclaimed his faith, Job warned his three friends of God's judgment ([Job 19:28-29](#); see [Job 42:7-9](#)).

Job expressed the hope that the story of his suffering, and his reflections on it, could be recorded for future generations ([Job 19:23-24](#)). He could hardly have known how completely that hope would be realized!

Job 20:1-29 *ZOPHAR: More examples, more insinuation.* Zophar began his second speech by challenging Job's right to rebuke his friends. He then followed in the footsteps of Eliphaz and Bildad by listing the sins of wicked men and the judgments brought down on them. And, like his friends, Zophar again implied that Job's suffering was God's judgment for his sin.

Job 21:1-34 *JOB'S RESPONSE: A list of his own.* Seeking to contradict his friends' contention that the wicked are always punished for their sins in this life, Job gave examples of how evil people prosper. The wicked often live very happy lives ([Job 21:7-16](#)). They are often honored both in life ([Job](#)

[21:31](#)) and in death ([Job 21:32](#)). His friends might say, in such cases, that the evil people's *children* would suffer for their parents' sins. Yet even if that were the case, the evil parents themselves would have escaped direct punishment ([Job 21:18-21](#)). In light of such evidence, the friends' argument that only the wicked suffer is totally false ([Job 21:34](#)).

[Job 22:1-5](#) *ELIPHAZ: "I repeat: You're suffering because of your sin!"* Speaking for the third time, Eliphaz reaffirmed the philosophy that he, along with Bildad and Zophar, had been advocating all along: People suffer because of sin. If that were not the case, Eliphaz reasoned, people's good deeds would have no value to God. Furthermore, the greatness of Job's suffering showed the greatness of his sin.

[Job 22:6-20](#) *A suggested list of Job's sins.* Although Eliphaz did not know of any specific sins Job had committed, he offered a few possibilities, including refusal to help the needy ([Job 22:6-11](#)) as well as a defiant attitude toward God ([Job 22:12-20](#)).

[Job 22:21-30](#) *A suggested remedy: Repent!* The solution still seemed simple to Eliphaz: Job must repent of his sins and turn to God; then, he would once again enjoy God's favor. Eliphaz's assessment of Job contrasted sharply with that of God ([Job 1:8](#); [Job 2:3](#)), of the book's author ([Job 1:1](#)), and of Job himself. Although Job did not respond immediately to Eliphaz's false charges, he would later mount a lengthy self-defense ([Job 29-31](#)).

[Job 23:1-17](#) *JOB'S RESPONSE: "If I could locate him, he might listen!"* Job expressed a desire to find God and make his plea to him in person. Job was confident that such an encounter would lead to his total vindication ([Job 23:10-12](#)). Even so, he knew that God was sovereign ([Job 23:13-14](#)) and therefore feared meeting him ([Job 23:15-17](#)).

[Job 24:1-17](#) *The godless person seems to prosper . . .* Job noted again how the ungodly prospered while God apparently ignored this unjust state of affairs.

[Job 24:18-25](#) . . . *but in a flash, he falls and is forgotten!* Job was confident, however, that although the wicked prospered and God seemingly ignored their misdeeds, he would eventually punish them. The basis for Job's confidence appears to be the fact that neither the righteous nor the wicked can escape death ([Job 24:20-24](#)).

[Job 25:1-6](#) *BILDAD: "If the stars don't measure up, how can sinners?"* Bildad's third discourse was short and to the point: God is all-powerful, as evidenced by his "army" ([Job 25:3](#), perhaps angels) and by his control of the natural world ("light," [Job 25:3](#)). And nothing, not even the moon or stars, possesses God's purity. Therefore, how can Job justify himself—since all humans are just worms or maggots in comparison to the stars?

While Bildad's affirmation of human sinfulness was correct, his application of this argument to Job's situation missed the point of Job's question concerning why the innocent suffer.

[Job 26:1-4](#) *JOB'S RESPONSE: A study in sarcasm.* Job began the longest speech of the book ([Job 26-31](#)) with a series of mocking questions that exposed Bildad (along with Eliphaz and Zophar) as insincere counselors who did not really care about the needy.

Job 26:5-14 *Nature's majesty a mere shadow of his might.* Job declared that the greatness of creation, to which Bildad had alluded ([Job 25:5](#)), revealed only a small portion of God's power ([Job 26:14](#)). God would later use creation as perhaps the best illustration of his own power ([Job 38-41](#)).

Job 27:1-6 *Job's vow: To serve in spite of suffering.* In another high point of faith, Job promised to maintain his integrity and declare his innocence even when his suffering might be viewed as a judgment from God.

Job 27:7-23 *A warning to his friends.* Job then called for God's judgment on his enemies ([Job 27:7](#)) and illustrated the ways God might judge them ([Job 27:8-23](#)). Undoubtedly he had his three so-called friends in mind.

Job 28:1-28 *Fear brings wisdom to the woeful.* Job then returned to meditating on the inability of humans to fully comprehend God's ways (see [Isaiah 55:8-9](#)). Humans do have great technological abilities ([Job 28:1-11](#)). In spite of such abilities, however, they cannot find or purchase wisdom because it is hidden ([Job 28:20-21](#)). Only God possesses perfect wisdom. In light of that fact, humans who want wisdom should have a healthy fear of God ([Job 28:28](#); see [Proverbs 1:7](#); [Proverbs 9:10](#)).

Applying this teaching to Job's situation, the sufferer must follow God in spite of his or her suffering, since only God fully understands what is going on.

Job 29:1-25 *Once respected for who he was and what he did . . .* Job began a lengthy self-defense, recalling the good old days when he was respected by all who knew him. That respect was inspired both by his good character ([Job 29:1-11](#)) and by his many good deeds ([Job 29:12-25](#)).

Job 30:1-14 . . . *but now despised even by the despicable!* In sharp contrast to the respect he once enjoyed, now Job was scorned even by "outcasts."

Job 30:15-31 *Unending pain, unanswered prayers.* Job's emotional affliction and physical pain led him to pray for relief. But God did not seem to hear ([Job 30:15-20](#)). Once again he challenged God, speaking of his supposed cruelty to the innocent Job ([Job 30:21-31](#)).

Job 31:1-40 *"If I have sinned, punish me!"* Job named a long list of sins, inviting his enemies to determine whether he had committed any of them, and then, if he had, to mete out the appropriate punishment. Job's own list of hypothetical sins is more extensive than Eliphaz's earlier list of false charges (see exposition on ^s[Job 22:6-20](#)). His confidence in his innocence is seen in his wish that his enemies would have written down his alleged crimes so that he could deal with them one by one ([Job 31:35-37](#)).

Job 32:1-22 *Enter Elihu, an angry young man.* Elihu, who was younger than Job and his three friends, had apparently been listening to their debate. Now he joined in, expressing anger at the four older men and arrogantly noting that older men were not always wise—thus his decision to join in the debate ([Job 32:5-9](#)). Elihu was angry at Job for trying to vindicate himself but was even more angry with Job's three friends for condemning Job without having convinced him that he was wrong ([Job 32:3, 10-15](#)). Because they had failed to make their case, Elihu felt that he should now offer his own opinion ([Job 32:16-22](#)).

[Job 33:1-7](#) *"I'll be your mediator."* Elihu expressed confidence in his own God-given wisdom and assured Job that he would give him a fair hearing and would help him make his case before God.

[Job 33:8-13](#) *Job's sin? Not actions, but attitude.* Elihu contended that Job had sinned, not in any action, but in his attitude toward God, namely his accusations of God's cruelty in spite of his innocence (see [Job 13:24-27](#); [Job 19:11](#); [Job 27:1-6](#)). Elihu was partly right about this. However, he had totally ignored the original question of the debate: Did sin cause Job's suffering? (Job's sinful *attitude* had arisen *after* his suffering, not before it.)

[Job 33:14-30](#) *"He speaks in many ways."* In response to Job's claim that God had been silent in the midst of his suffering ([Job 13:24](#)), Elihu asserted that God does speak—through dreams or visions ([Job 33:14-18](#)), through physical pain ([Job 33:19-22](#)), and through angels ([Job 33:23](#)). If Job would respond to these messages from God, he would regain his health and happiness ([Job 33:24-30](#)).

[Job 33:31-34:4](#) *"Speak up, or listen and learn!"* Elihu invited Job to respond to his comments or, if he had no response, to keep on listening. He invited Job's three friends to do the same.

[Job 34:5-9](#) *"Here's what he said . . ."* Elihu summed up Job's two main complaints against God: that God is unjust ([Job 34:5-6](#)) and that righteousness does not pay ([Job 34:9](#)). He would answer the first complaint in the rest of [Job 34](#) and the second in [Job 35](#).

[Job 34:10-37](#) *"The creature cannot condemn his Creator!"* In answer to Job's claim that God is unjust, Elihu, like the three friends, defended God's justice. Also like the three friends, he assumed that Job had sinned ([Job 34:36-37](#)) since God would not allow the innocent to suffer (see [Job 36:7](#)). He confidently asserted that other wise men agreed with his assessment: Job was being foolish and was rebelling against God ([Job 34:34-37](#)).

While Elihu assumed that Job had sinned, he did not accuse him of any specific sins, nor did he dwell on Job's sinfulness as the cause of his suffering, as the first three debaters had done. Elihu focused, rather, on the value of suffering for moral instruction (see exposition on [§Job 36:5-23](#)).

[Job 35:1-16](#) *"Righteousness or rebellion: He notices neither."* Next, Elihu addressed the second part of Job's complaint: that his present suffering showed there was no benefit in righteous living ([Job 35:1-3](#)). Elihu responded that human actions, whether good or bad, have no effect on God ([Job 35:6-7](#)), therefore Job should not expect any quick answers from him. His only option was to "wait" in faith ([Job 35:14](#)).

Numerous Scriptures on both God's love and his anger call into question Elihu's view of a God unaffected by human actions (see [Genesis 6:3-6](#); [Matthew 23:37](#); [2 Peter 3:9](#)).

[Job 36:1-4](#) *"I've got all the answers, so listen!"* Claiming to have "well-rounded knowledge," Elihu again encouraged Job and his friends to listen carefully as he "defended" God.

[Job 36:5-23](#) *"Let him teach you in tribulation!"* Elihu asserted that God used tribulation and trouble as a teaching tool to drive the ungodly to repentance. He suggested that Job had been slow to learn this lesson ([Job 36:16-23](#)) and encouraged him not to let his bitterness lead him to sin ([Job 36:21](#)).

While God does sometimes use suffering to bring us to repentance (see [Hebrews 12:5-11](#)), the Bible clearly teaches that suffering is not always the result of sin or of God's desire to discipline (see [Spiritual Lessons from Job](#)).

[Job 36:24-37:24](#) *"Who can know the Unknowable?"* Rather than becoming bitter, said Elihu, Job should learn to praise God for the greatness of his creation. Elihu proceeded to do just that, speaking of God's majesty and mystery. He challenged Job to explain various natural phenomena ([Job 37:14-22](#)) and concluded that God is unknowable ([Job 37:23-24](#)).

[Job 38:1](#) *GOD SPEAKS: Answers in a whirlwind.* Now that Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, and Elihu had finished their discussions, God spoke. Rather than addressing the question at hand—Why do the innocent suffer?—God answered more with his awesome presence ("from the whirlwind") than with his words. He pointed again and again to the wonders of his creation and to the inability of humans to fully know him (see [Isaiah 55:9](#)).

[Job 38:2-11](#) *"Where were you when I made the earth?"* God declared that Job had spoken "ignorant words." He then began a series of rhetorical questions to show Job how little he knew about the world. For one thing, Job knew little about the creation of the world since he had not been there at the time ([Job 38:4-7](#)).

[Job 38:12-38](#) *"How well do you know the heavens and the earth?"* Did Job know what caused light and darkness ([Job 38:19-20](#)), what the dimensions of the earth were ([Job 38:18](#)), or what caused various weather patterns ([Job 38:22-30](#))? What about stars and clouds ([Job 38:31-38](#))? Job's response to all of this should have been to acknowledge God's dominion over all ([Job 38:33](#)).

Though Job did not understand the causes behind these natural phenomena, God spoke to him as one well acquainted with the basic facts of creation and laws of nature.

[Job 38:39-39:30](#) *"What about my animals?"* Closer to home, God now quizzed Job about his knowledge of various animals:

"Do they need you?" ([38:39-39:8](#)) First mentioned were lions, birds, mountain goats, deer, and wild donkeys, all of which give birth, raise their young, and generally go about their lives without human help. The implication is that God's supremacy is above man's dominion.

"Can you tame them?" ([39:9-12](#)) How could Job presume to challenge God when he couldn't even tame the wild ox, one of God's lesser creatures?

"How do you explain this one?" ([39:13-18](#)) God asked Job to examine the strange features of the ostrich: a bird that couldn't fly, often destroyed its own young, seemed rather stupid, yet could run faster than a horse. Could Job have ever designed such an animal?

"Can you control the horse or the hawk?" ([39:19-30](#)) Creatures as diverse as the mighty horse and soaring birds of prey reflect the majesty of their Creator and live their lives outside of human control.

[Job 40:1-2](#) *"Can you answer any of those questions?"* As he had done at the beginning of his discourse ([Job 38:2-3](#)), God issued a challenge to Job: If Job wanted to accuse God of wrongdoing in allowing his suffering, he should be prepared to answer the questions God had posed concerning the wonder of his creation.

Job 40:3-5 *JOB'S RESPONSE: "I've talked too much already!"* Job acknowledged his insignificance compared to God. In a gesture of contrition, he put his hand over his mouth and ceased his complaints.

Job 40:6-14 *GOD SPEAKS AGAIN: Only God can criticize God!* The Lord continued his challenge of Job, questioning his ability to judge his fellow humans, much less his Maker.

Job 40:15-24 *By the way, what about the behemoth?* God then described the behemoth, apparently the largest land animal of its day ([Job 40:19](#)). How could Job question God, since he could not design such a creature? Various scholars have identified the behemoth as

- a real animal still existing today, such as the hippopotamus (this theory is reflected in the NLT's rendering)
- a real but extinct animal, such as a dinosaur
- a mythical animal, such as a dragon

In light of its immensity ([Job 40:17-20](#)), it seems most likely that the behemoth was a dinosaur-type creature. Job's apparent firsthand knowledge of the behemoth would thus imply that humans and dinosaurs coexisted. Since evolutionary theory precludes such a possibility, scholars who believe in evolution usually assert that the behemoth was a smaller, still-existent animal. That the behemoth was a real animal and not some mythical creature can be seen from the context: Having described real animals as proof of his majesty, why would God climax his argument by describing an imaginary being?

Job 41:1-34 *Can you catch and control Leviathan?* Having presented his greatest land creature as proof of his power, God then presented his greatest sea creature, Leviathan. If Job could not create a behemoth or Leviathan, how could he presume to complain against one who could? Like the behemoth, Leviathan has been variously identified as

- a sea creature still existing today, such as the crocodile or whale
- an aquatic dinosaur
- a mythical creature, such as a sea serpent or dragon

The biblical description makes it most likely that Leviathan was an aquatic dinosaur-type creature. To identify Leviathan as a still-existent creature woefully ignores its bizarre description. Though the term "Leviathan" can be traced to Canaanite traditions about a mythical sea monster, and though the text does appear to describe a malevolent dragonlike creature ([Job 41:14-21](#), [34](#)), the existence of a mythical name does not imply that such a creature was not real. On the contrary, the ubiquitous legends of dragons suggest a basis in reality. [Psalm 104:25-26](#) names Leviathan as one of many real sea creatures. So also here, Leviathan should be taken as literally as all the other animals in the preceding chapters.

Job 42:1-6 *JOB'S RESPONSE: "I had heard, now I see!"* Having seen his glory as never before, Job humbly repented of his complaints against God.

[Job 42:7-9](#) *A sacrifice for their false advice.* Because of their false counsel, God commanded Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar to offer sacrifices and to allow Job to serve as their priest and pray for them.

[Job 42:10-17](#) *Restored health, double the wealth, and more!* Because he repented, God restored Job to health and gave him double his original wealth. He gave him as many sons and daughters as he had had before and allowed him to live another 140 years.

In the end, God never gave a reason for Job's suffering. Rather, he showed that he was sovereign over all circumstances of life, whether good or bad. His restoration of Job's wealth and well-being was a wonderful demonstration of that sovereignty (see [Psalm 23](#)).

JOB

(PEOPLE TO REMEMBER FROM JOB)

Key Facts: Accused by Satan before God, allowed to suffer greatly, eventually restored ([Job 1:9-12](#); [Job 2:2-8](#); [Job 42:10](#))

Wife: Unnamed ([Job 2:9](#))

Sons: 14 unnamed ([Job 1:2](#); [Job 42:13](#))

Daughters: Jemimah, Keziah, Keren-happuch, and 3 unnamed ([Job 1:2](#); [Job 42:13-14](#))

Occupation: Rancher ([Job 1:3](#))

Total Bible References: 56

Key References: [Job 1-42](#); [Ezekiel 14:14, 20](#); [James 5:11](#)

Job Speaks

"The LORD gave me everything I had, and the LORD has taken it away. Praise the name of the LORD!" That was my testimony at the very beginning. Now, safe on the other side of that pain-wracked, despair-filled period, I would say it like this: "The LORD gave, the LORD has taken away, and the LORD has given again; praise the name of the LORD!" ([Job 1:21](#))

For so he has! I suffered the loss of my fortune, my family, my health, and the goodwill of my friends. But now my wealth has been doubled and my health restored. Ten children have been added to my family, and my once false friends are now true companions once more. ([Job 1:13-19](#); [Job 2:7-8, 11](#); [Job 42:7, 9, 10-15](#))

How tragically ironic, though, that agonizing time! I sought desperately to see God, but he desired that I first see myself as the sinner I really was. When that finally happened, the grief turned to gladness. What a glorious God! ([Job 23:3](#); [Job 40:3-4](#); [Job 42:5-6](#))

Even though he gave me an additional 140 years, I know I must soon die. But no matter. My assurance back then is my comfort today: "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that he will stand upon the earth at last. And after my body has decayed, yet in my body I will see God!" ([Job 19:25-26](#); [Job 42:16-17](#)).

Spiritual Lessons from Job

- Job was both a righteous and a rich man ([Job 1:1-3](#)). It is possible to be both. However, see [Matthew 19:23-26](#).
- It is reassuring to know that Satan must obtain permission from God himself before he can tempt a believer ([Job 1:6-12](#); [Job 2:1-6](#)). Furthermore, God determines the boundaries of each trial, for he knows just how much each of us can bear (see [1 Cor. 10:13](#)).
- Job's three friends claimed that his suffering was the result of his sin ([Job 4:7-8](#); [Job 8:20](#)), but God rebuked them for this erroneous teaching ([Job 42:7](#); see [John 9:1-3](#)). In reality, Job was allowed to suffer to accomplish several things:
 - to answer Satan's accusations ([Job 1:9-11](#); [Job 2:4-5](#))
 - to teach Job about God's sovereignty ([Job 42:1-5](#))
 - to make Job more aware of his own sinfulness (compare [Job 29](#); [Job 31](#) with [Job 40:4](#); [Job 42:6](#))

God allows suffering for other reasons as well:

- Hebrews 12:5-11). Even Christ, though sinless, learned from his suffering ([Hebrews 5:8](#)).
- John 9:1-3).
- Romans 8:18-39).

Key Verses

"For examples of patience in suffering, look at the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. We give great honor to those who endure under suffering. Job is an example of a man who endured patiently. From his experience we see how the Lord's plan finally ended in good, for he is full of tenderness and mercy" ([James 5:10-11](#)).