

Who was Job in the Bible?

The life of Job demonstrates that humans are often unaware of the many ways God is at work in the life of each believer. Job's life is also one that prompts the common question, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" It is the age-old question, and difficult to answer, but believers know that God is always in control, and, no matter what happens, there are no coincidences—nothing happens by chance. Job was a believer; he knew that God was on the throne and in total control, though he had no way of knowing why so many terrible tragedies were occurring in his life.

Job was "blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil" (Job 1:1). He had ten children and was a man of great wealth. The Bible tells us that one day Satan presented himself before God and God asked Satan what he thought of Job. Satan accused Job of honoring God only because God had blessed him. So, God allowed Satan to take away Job's wealth and his children. Later, God allowed Satan to afflict Job physically. Job grieved deeply but did not charge God with wrongdoing (Job 1:22; 42:7-8).

Job's friends were certain that Job must have sinned in order to deserve punishment and argued with him about it. But Job maintained his innocence, though he confessed that he wanted to die and did ask questions of God. A younger man, Elihu, attempted to speak on God's behalf before God, Himself, answered Job. Job 38–42 contain some of the most stunning poetry about the magnitude and might of God. Job responded to God's discourse in humility and repentance, saying he had spoken of things he did not know (Job 40:3-5; 42:1-6). God told Job's friends that He was angry with them for speaking falsehoods about Him, unlike Job who had spoken truth (Job 42:7-8). God told them to offer sacrifices and that Job would pray on their behalf and God would accept Job's prayer. Job did so, likely forgiving his friends for their harshness himself. God restored Job's

fortunes two-fold (Job 42:10) and "blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the former part" (Job 42:12). Job lived 140 years after his suffering.

Job never lost his faith in God, even under the most heartbreaking circumstances that tested him to his core. It's hard to imagine losing everything we own in one day—property, possessions, and even children. Most men would sink into depression and perhaps even become suicidal after such massive loss. Though depressed enough to curse the day of his birth (Job 3:1-26), Job never cursed God (Job 2:9-10) nor did he waver in his understanding that God was still in control. Job's three friends, on the other hand, instead of comforting him, gave him bad advice and even accused him of committing sins so grievous that God was punishing him with misery. Job knew God well enough to know that He did not work that way; in fact, he had such an intimate, personal relationship with Him that he was able to say, "Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him; I will surely defend my ways to his face" (Job 13:15). When Job's wife suggested he curse God and die, Job replied, "You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?" (Job 2:10).

Job's plight, from the death of his children and loss of his property to the physical torment he endured, plus the harangue of his so-called friends, never caused his faith to waver. He knew who his Redeemer was, he knew that He was a living Savior, and he knew that someday He would physically stand on the earth (Job 19:25). He understood that man's days are ordained (numbered) and they cannot be changed (Job 14:5). The spiritual depth of Job shows throughout the book. James refers to Job as an example of perseverance, writing, "Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen

what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy" (James 5:10-11).

There are also several scientific and historical facts in the book of Job. The book implied the earth is round long before the advent of modern science (Job 22:14). The book mentions dinosaurs—not by that name, but the description of the behemoth is certainly dinosaur-like—living side by side with man (Job 40:15-24).

The book of Job gives us a glimpse behind the veil that separates earthly life from the heavenly. In the beginning of the book, we see that Satan and his fallen angels are still allowed access to heaven, going in and out to the prescribed meetings that take place there. What is obvious from these accounts is that Satan is busy working his evil on earth, as recorded in Job 1:6-7. Also, this account shows how Satan is “the accuser of the brethren,” which corresponds to Revelation 12:10, and it shows his arrogance and pride, as written in Isaiah 14:13-14. It is amazing to see how Satan challenges God; he has no scruples about confronting the Most High. The account in Job shows Satan as he truly is—haughty and evil to the core.

Perhaps the greatest lesson we learn from the book of Job is that God does not have to answer to anyone for what He does or does not do. Job’s experience teaches us that we may never know the specific reason for suffering, but we must trust in our sovereign, holy, righteous God. His ways are perfect (Psalm 18:30). Since God’s ways are perfect, we can trust that whatever He does—and whatever He allows—is also perfect. We can’t expect to understand God’s mind perfectly, as He reminds us, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways. . . . For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts”

(Isaiah 55:8-9).

Our responsibility to God is to obey Him, to trust Him, and to submit to His will, whether we understand it or not. When we do, we will find God in the midst of our trials—possibly even because of our trials. We will see more clearly the magnificence of our God, and we will say, with Job, “My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you” (Job 42:5).