

# Old Testament Core Seminar

---

## Introduction

Good morning. Today we are jumping ahead in the Old Testament to the book of Job. Don't worry, we'll be going back and picking up the books we're skipping over temporarily.

Now, there is a reason we are jumping forward like this. If you open up your supplemental handout called "**The Revelation of God in Redemptive-Historical Order**," you'll see a funny looking arrangement of the books of the Old Testament under bold-faced headings. What this is is an arrangement of the Old Testament designed to reflect the various stages of redemptive-history (before the birth of Christ), and where each book fits into redemptive-history. Basically, it's a way to understand the redemptive-historical context of each Old Testament book, and what each book itself adds to the story of the Old Testament.

So, if you just look at the bold-faced **headings**, what you'll see is that every Old Testament book falls into one of these categories. Each of these categories describes what is going on in the books listed beneath them. You'll also notice that there is a mirroring effect with these categories. Look at the third one. It's called "The Crowning of God's King." That's what we studied last week, how the kingship came about in Israel, and what that means. Well, if you look straight down from that you'll see the heading "The Disobedience of God's King." All of those books listed there are about the subsequent kings after David. They are often compared to David, and, unfortunately, rarely measure up. And thus begins a downward spiral in Israel that will result in the people being removed from the land of promise. Hence, the next category is called "The Disestablishment of God's People." Those book listed there all describe the experience of exile from the land, when God's people were taken captive to Babylon and Jerusalem lay waste for 70 years. If you go directly up from that, you'll see that the mirroring category is called "The Establishment of God's People." Those are the books we studied where Israel first took the land. Do you see the point of the mirror now? *One side of it represents forward progress in the life of the nation as part of God's plan of redemption, and the other side represents decline, and reversal of the plan of redemption in the life of the nation.* But, then there is a return from exile which is often described in the language of creation. Thus, the last category is called "The Re-Creation of God's People." It is also the time when God claims the people as His own once again, just like He did when He first led them out of Egypt in the exodus nearly 1,000 years earlier. That's why it mirrors the first category called "The Creation of God's People." That one is named so because those first five books describe Yahweh's calling of the nation of Israel to himself in the very creation language of Genesis. We looked at that in the first class covering the book of Exodus.

Anyway, all of that, to point out the middle category. It's called "**The Wisdom and Praise of God's King**." It's called that because a great number of the Psalms were written either by, for, or about David (with special reference to the promises Yahweh made to David in 2 Samuel 7). Then, most of the Proverbs and all of Ecclesiastes and the Song were written by Solomon, who is also viewed (at least for the first part of his reign) as a great king in the history of redemption. Thus, these books fit well into a redemptive-historical consideration of the Old Testament right at the moment of the kingship's establishment and height. And that is why we are moving from 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel straight into the wisdom literature, sometimes called the

poetic books. These books represent the wisdom that the kings of Israel were supposed to rule by. And it is no small thing that these poetic books of wisdom and praise are primarily identified with the kings who most exemplified what the king in Israel should be like, and most prefigured the great and final king, King Jesus. Though many of the psalms, some of the proverbs, and most likely all of the book of Job were written by people other than King David or King Solomon, the genre of wisdom literature and poetry is primarily known as the king's work. He is to rule by wisdom, and lead the people in praise and worship of God.

So we are jumping to "The Wisdom and Praise of God's King" while we are still at a point in redemptive-history where the king of Israel is reigning over all the people of God from Jerusalem. Admittedly, this is an overly simplified way of looking at the Old Testament, and it by no means explains everything there is to know about the contents of the Old Testament. And it's certainly not the only way to outline and structure the Old Testament. But it is a good way of beginning to get our minds around how these individual books relate to each other, and fit together to tell one complete story. And so this little chart will help us navigate the rest of the way through this course, and help you understand why we are jumping from one book to another. If it seems overwhelming, then throw it away (it's by no means inspired). If it's helpful, use it. At any rate we'll still talk about the redemptive-historical context of each book before we study it, so you won't get lost in this course if you don't memorize this page.

## [PRAY]

### Context

Well, as we come to Job, ironically, you can go ahead and forget everything I just said. It most likely was not written by any king, and it has less to do with redemptive-history itself, and more to do with just plain wisdom from God. The reason, though, that it's included in this section is because we really don't know where else to place it. It doesn't focus on the people of God as a corporate entity like the books in the other categories. In that way it has more in common with the Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, so we throw it into this category. It is also written in the same genre as the rest of the books in this category: poetry.

We'll consider *how* to go about interpreting poetry next week when we look at the psalms. For this week we just want to consider the content itself of Job.

The story itself that is told in the book of Job probably took place sometime before even Abraham was born, but it wasn't written down until after the exodus.<sup>1</sup> Moses may well be the author, but we really don't know. It takes place in the land of Uz (cf. 1:1) which was most likely in northern Arabia.

## [TAKE QUESTIONS]

### Theme

The book of Job asks some difficult questions:

---

<sup>1</sup> I think this because in the narrative the divine name, Yahweh, is often used. Thus the writer was a part of the covenant people of Israel who didn't learn God's name until Moses was called in Exodus 3. Yet, when the characters speak they refer to God simply as "God," suggesting that they did not know the divine name because it had not been revealed to Moses yet, nor trumpeted all over the earth in the exodus event. There are two exceptions to this in the whole book, and those are in popular proverbial sayings (1:21; 12:9), making me think they are a redaction either by the original author himself or some later scribe.

*Why do the righteous suffer in the same way as the unrighteous? We might be tempted to think that evil people suffer and godly people are rewarded with ease, comfort, and riches. But it is not so in this world. Many wicked people seem to go unpunished, and many upright people suffer all the time. How then do we explain why the righteous suffer? And, perhaps more importantly, how do the righteous handle it, and conduct themselves, when they do suffer?*

You see, two things are assumed here: (1) That God is sovereign and ordains everything whatsoever that comes to pass in His universe; and (2) God is good, loving what is right and hating what is evil. The problem is that these two things don't seem to jive when the righteous suffer, and the unrighteous prosper. Either, God is not in control of the universe after all, and chaos, blind fate, dumb luck, and chance rule the world; or, perhaps God doesn't care about the morality and ethics of His creatures. Perhaps God is just fatalistic, or worse, doesn't know good from evil, or *still worse*, actually favors evil over good. This is a real problem!

Well, by the end of the book, these difficult questions are not answered for us in a neat little formula. There is no simple pat answer for such colossal issues. Still, they are dealt with in a powerful and humbling way in the book of Job. We can summarize this book's resolution to these issues like this:

*God is completely sovereign over ALL the affairs of His universe, for His own glory. But sometimes His motives, reasons, and goals behind what He does are NOT revealed to us. He knows them, but we are not always made privy to them. The thing to do, then, is to humbly submit to His sovereignty, not to grumble against it. We are never to shake our fists at God, nor question His wisdom and goodness, as though we could run the universe better than He. Nevertheless, hope in the suffering of the righteous is found in a future resurrection and in a Redeemer.*

This is not New Testament Systematic Theology with a few proof texts from Job. Rather, this is the message of the book of Job. It takes on these mammoth issues. And what's great about Job, is that it doesn't give us some simplistic, easily grasped, cliché of an answer. There is no one to one correspondence between evil and suffering, nor righteousness and reward, *this side of heaven*. Rather, these issues are complicated and sticky. Thus, Job deals with them in a very realistic way. They are troubling, they are difficult, and can't just be swept aside by dogmatic affirmations. They need to be dealt with seriously, soberly, humbly, reverently, and sensitively. And thus the book of Job handles them. There is real suffering in the book, and there are wrongheaded attempts to resolve the issue. It's not until God finally speaks at the end that a bit of clarity is brought to the haze of confusion. And we should expect that shouldn't we? A vision of the Almighty and who He is, always puts other things into focus.

Nonetheless, we are real people who still live in a real world with real suffering everyday. And that is one of the things that makes Jesus such a savior indeed! He didn't deal with our sufferings in the abstract or with some philosophical formula. He entered into our experience and suffered with us. From that position, as an insider experiencing everything we experience, did He arise and become our Great High Priest who can identify and empathize with us. This gives us confidence to approach Him in our time of need, knowing that we will find in Him mercy and grace as One who sympathizes with us. But I get ahead of myself. We'll come back to Christ before we're done for the day.

## [TAKE QUESTIONS]

---

[This outline is explained in the text below.]

### Outline w/ Pivotal Texts

- I. Job 1-2 – God sets His plan in action
- II. Job 3-14 – First Round of Discussion:
  - Job’s friends insist that this calamity has come upon him because he’s sinned, and therefore must repent. Job maintains that he is innocent in this situation.
- III. Job 15-21 – Second Round of Discussion:
  - Job’s friends insist that his speech is wrong (i.e.: he either doesn’t know what he’s talking about, or he’s lying). But Job insists that he’s right.
- IV. Job 22-26 – Third Round of Discussion:
  - Job’s friends say he’s hiding something. But Job says he’s righteous.
- V. Job 27-31 – Two Monologues by Job:
  - Man cannot discover God’s wisdom.
- VI. Job 32-37 – Four Monologues by Elihu:
  - Human observers cannot expect to adequately understand God’s dealings in justice and mercy, for indeed, God might have a loving purpose after all in Job’s sufferings. Even still, in this suffering, it is still of great value to lead a godly life.
- VII. Job 38-42 – God questions Job:
  - “Who are you, oh man, to doubt and question the wisdom and workings of the Almighty?”

\*Each round of discussion follows this pattern: one of Job’s friends speaks, then Job responds to that friend before another friend speaks, then Job responds to that friend, and so forth.

---

### Theme texts

As with any book, the best way to understand what’s going in Job is to understand the flow of thought. For that, take a look at the **outline** printed on the back of your handout. Job is a *long* book with a *lot* of long extended speeches by various characters. It’s easy, therefore, to get lost and wonder what any one speech has to do with the others and where the book is going. Hopefully this outline will help you understand what’s going on.

**The story**, in case you don’t know it, goes like this: Satan is granted permission by God to strike Job, who a righteous man (not a sinless man, but a man of integrity). He loses his wealth and family and health. Then three of Job’s friends come to talk with him about what’s going on and what Job ought to do. Then a fourth friend comes and adds his two cents. Finally, God himself weighs in on the discussion. By the end of the book Job has everything restored, and then some.

## Chapters 3-14

You'll notice that the first section describes the calamity that befalls Job. Then it can get confusing. In chapters 3-14 there is a discussion going on. Job speaks first, then each of his friends speak. Job responds to each of friends before the next one speaks. Basically, to help you get an understanding of the direction of their conversation, what's happening is that Job's friends all believe that Job must have done something wrong to invite this disaster upon him. Look at **4:7-9**, [READ] and **5:17**. [READ] This is Eliphaz talking, and Job's two other friends agree with these conclusions in this first round of discussion. You see, these guys have a mechanical and automatic view of the universe. They are saying that the only reason calamity happens is because the victims of that calamity must have sinned, and they are getting their just reward. Look at **8:3-7**. [READ] So Job is urged to repent of whatever it was he's done. However, Job maintains that he is innocent and that this is not the result of sin; something else must be going on than this simplistic one-to-one-correspondence between sin and suffering. Look at **10:2-7**. [READ]

## Chapters 15-21

Next, Job's friends have another go at him, and he defends himself again. His friends say that his words are profitless and hollow. Look at **15:2-3**. [READ] But again, in this round of discussion, Job insists that his is right, and they are wrong. Look at **21:34**. [READ]

## Chapters 22-26

Finally, in their last round of discussion, Job's friends (if you can still call them friends by this point!) say he must be hiding something. Look at **22:12-14**. [READ] And so they continue to urge him to repent. Look at **22:21**. [READ] But Job still says he's righteous. Look at **23:11-12**. [READ]

## Chapters 27-31

Job then ends the discussions with his friends by concluding that whatever God is doing, mortal man cannot figure it out. Look at **28:12-13**, [READ] and **28:20-24**. [READ] So for Job, he's at an end of himself.

## Chapters 32-37

But then a fourth friend shows up, Elihu, and he's not happy with anyone. Look at **32:1-3**. Elihu believes that there is far too much navel-gazing and pointing at Job going on, and not enough looking at God. So Elihu gives four monologues on the greatness of God's justice and mercy which are beyond human understanding, and challenges Job to consider that his sufferings may in some way be a loving act of God. Look at **37:13**. [READ] So that which God does to punish some, is actually loving towards others. Finally Elihu concludes with this: look at **37:23-24**. [READ]

## Chapters 38-42

Finally, God Himself comes to the discussion. A lot of questions and a lot of accusations have been made. What will the Almighty say? Look at **38:1-4**. [READ] Boom! The first question is a knockout blow. Job has no leg to stand on with the Almighty. He has no ground for complaint. Suddenly he realizes that he is contending with things far bigger than himself and far greater than he realized. And the questions keep coming. Look at **verse 5**, [READ] **verse 12**, [READ] **verse 22**, [READ] **verses 31-35**, [READ] **chapter 39, verses 19-27**. [READ] How can Job compete with that? Now Job realizes *who* he's dealing with, and how small he himself is. Look at **40:1-2**. [READ] That's basically what God is saying to Job.

Anyway, this exposition of God's majesty goes on through the end of chapter 41. I would really encourage you to read Job, chapters 38-41 sometime. It is very healthy for us to read these extended texts that extol God for His greatness. If we do, perhaps we'll respond the same way Job did. Look at **42:1-6**. [READ] Job is utterly humbled.

It is interesting to point out here that in everything Job's questions are not answered, and neither are ours. Rather, we are exhorted to put our hands over our mouths and stop wagging our tongues as though we could providentially govern the universe better than God can. The affairs of the universe are far too great for us, and we'd do a lot better to reverently fear a God who is so sovereign and powerful, than to bicker with Him when we feel our lot in life isn't as good as it should be. We don't know what God is doing in every work of providence of His, and He is in no way beholden to *us* to have to explain Himself, and give an account of Himself, all the time nor anytime.

## [TAKE QUESTIONS]

Well, let's return now to those issues we brought up earlier. If **God is sovereign and good**, why are bad things happening to Job, who is described in 1:1 as "blameless and upright?" Or, let's take a big step back and ask another question: If God is sovereign and good, why do bad things happen to anyone? It's quite a tension. If God were really good, why doesn't He prevent bad things from happening? In fact, if God is sovereign, is He not only allowing bad things to happen, but actually positively causing "bad" things to happen? If that were the case, would that mean that He isn't good after all? Or, maybe He's just not sovereign and He really can't do anything about the bad things that happen in our world.

Well, these are not just philosophical questions. They come from real life experiences and need to be understood, because everyone either has, does, or will suffer. That is just the inevitable experience of everyone who lives in this world. Some experience it more than others. But all suffer in one way or another. Everything is not always just right. So it's important that such things about God and suffering be addressed. And we can thank God that He's given us this book to steer us in the right direction of thought.

## Chapters 1-2

Let's get into some specific texts that address this dilemma. First two preliminary things. First: God *is* good. The Bible is clear on this. No one really disputes it. Look at **Job 34:10**, [READ] and **verse 12**. [READ] And there are a plethora of other texts affirming the goodness and the justice of God. He only does what is righteous. He never does what is evil. Like I said, no one really contends with that. The issue then becomes, *is God really sovereign?*

Before we address that, a second preliminary point. Turn to **chapter 42, verse 7**. [READ] What I want you to notice from this verse is that the LORD is saying that Job has said the right things about God in this book. Whether or not Job has said the right things about himself is still up in the air, but he has said the right things about *God*. Whereas Job's three friends were wrong about God. What did they say? They said God causes calamity to come upon people for one simple reason only: they must have sinned. All one needs to do is repent, and God will take away the trouble. They thought there was a one to one correspondence between sin and suffering, as though God only existed to respond to man's ethical failings. As though He's just a cop who provides moral balance to the universe. Well, the solution between God's sovereignty and suffering is not so simply solved with this neat and easy one-to-one correspondence, if you do wrong you get punished and that's it; that's where trouble and calamity in this world come from.

Let's now see what Job has said about God, and maybe we'll do better than Job's friends at understanding this. Turn to **chapter 1**, and let's start in **verse 8**. [READ] Notice first that Yahweh initiates this conversation with Satan. What is about to happen, is *Yahweh's* plan, not Satan's. At any rate, Satan responds with this: look at **verses 9-11**. [READ] In the following verses Job loses his property and children to raiders and natural disasters. Now, let's read Job's response to these sudden life-altering disasters. Look at **verse 20**. [READ THROUGH VERSE 21] Now that's amazing isn't it? He didn't complain or grumble. Rather, verse 20 says he *worshipped!* [PAUSE] And then he says that *the LORD* has taken these things away. He does not say that there is some kind of wicked force outside of God that God cannot control, as though there were two sovereigns in the universe, one good and one evil, and God just can't seem to get the upper hand. In fact, throughout chapters 1 and 2 Satan has to get permission from God before he can do anything. So whatever Satan's evil plans might be, God has him squarely on a leash.

Now look at the writer's commentary on what Job has said in **verse 22**. [READ] He's saying that God was doing nothing wrong by striking Job like this. And Job is indeed right to say that *God did it*.

In the next chapter more calamity befalls Job. His wife gives him this advice: look at **2:9**. [READ] This is still the advice some give today. They say it's therapeutic to get angry with God. Is that wise? Well, Job says this in **verse 10**. [READ] And notice that Job is again confirmed in his accuracy about God's sovereignty. By saying Job did not sin in what he said, the writer is saying that Job was not wrong. Indeed, *both good and trouble come from the hand of the same God*.<sup>2</sup>

So, we're really back where we started: God is good, and God is sovereign. And as we've already seen, God tells Job that the mystery of His providence is too great for Job to grasp. What's more significant then, is *how one is to handle themselves* in such times. Instead of pointing fingers and shaking fists at God, or throwing off one's faith, we are called to *trust* God at those times. Like Job, we should worship this powerful Creator who we've just seen describe Himself in chapters 38-41. We should not respond like Job's wife suggested. Rather, look at **13:15**. [READ FIRST PART OF THE VERSE] Job will trust in God no matter what. And ,

---

<sup>2</sup> Job makes a lot more statements like this throughout the rest of the book: 6:4; 7:20; 9:17, 24; 10:8f; 12:9f; 12:13-25; 13:15; 14:5; 19:21; 23:13f.

again as we saw, Job also learns an element of humility by the end. All the while he is never told *why* this has all happened. Nor does he ever find out about all the discussion between God and Satan in chapters 1-2. In the same way, we don't always know what God is doing nor why. But faith tells us that He is indeed doing it, and that He is good, and we can trust Him.

## [TAKE QUESTIONS]

**14:10-17; 16:18-22; 17:13-16; 19:25-27**

Well is that all we're left with? Are we just left with God's sovereignty over all things, and supposed to say "Oh well, that's how it is. I guess it's beyond my understanding. I'll just have to live with calamity in a universe governed by a good God. Doesn't make sense, but I guess that's all we've got."? On one hand, yes. We are to trust the governance of the universe to God and not think ourselves wiser than He. However, there is one more thing to the story here. Turn to **chapter 19**, and look at **verse 25**. [READ THROUGH VERSE 27] Did you hear that in verse 26? Job believes that there will be a resurrection. And, verse 25, this resurrection will in some way be accomplished by some Redeemer. That is Job's only hope in this situation. Though things seem imbalanced now, he knows that they will not always be! Some day, even after he dies, in his flesh he will see God, and all will be right.

In this then, in **the future resurrection**, we have our hope too. The fact of the matter is that no world-religion, and no world-and-life-view has a cute little answer for why suffering exists. All anyone can do is just recognize that it does exist. However, Christianity is unique because, while we may not know the origin of evil, we do know its *destiny*. You see, evil and suffering are here, yes, but God is doing something about them. A day is prepared for the future for when evil and suffering will be known no more. It may be with us now, but it will not always be.

The guarantee of this is the **resurrection of Christ** Himself. His was the greatest injustice. His was the greatest suffering. Yet he was vindicated by God. Now, because He has been raised, we believe that we will be too. And then, the greatest suffering of all, death, will be defeated together with all other sufferings. All balances will be set right, all justice will be done, and Christ will rule in righteousness forever more.

## Conclusion

So for us, we trust God in our sufferings at the time they occur, and also look beyond them, knowing that our life is hidden in Christ, and it is not yet revealed what we will be when He returns and resurrects His people to an eternal "rest."

## Application

Now, we are almost there. We've established God's goodness and sovereignty. We've considered our response of confidence and trust in God amidst our sufferings. And we've seen that our hope in suffering lies in the future, knowing that God will right every situation for His glory and our good. So we trust God, and look to the future. But what can we *do* in times of suffering? The answer is, go to Jesus. Turn to Christ. Pray to him. Pour your lamentations humbly out to Him, and petition Him for help. Turn to **Hebrews 2**, and we'll start reading in **verse 10**. And what we are going to notice here is that Jesus is such a Great High Priest for us

because He didn't deal with our sufferings in the abstract or with some philosophical formula. He entered into our experience and suffered with us. This gives us confidence to approach Him in our time of need, knowing that we will find in Him One who can empathize and sympathize with us. [READ THROUGH VERSE 18] Now look at **chapter 4, verse 14**. [READ THROUGH VERSE 16] Christ knows what you're going through. He knows your pain in a very real way, for He has tasted the worst of it all Himself. Thus, no one can say that nobody knows what they are going through. Maybe it's true that here on earth, no one really understands what you are going through. But ultimately, someone does. Jesus does. And so we can go to him with every fear, every disappointment, and every emotion and find a Great High Priest who can sympathize and give us mercy and grace in that our time of need.<sup>3</sup>

And of course, the application needs to be made that we all need to put our trust in Christ for the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God. For only those justified through faith alone in Christ have this future hope of seeing God to look forward to. The rest, sadly, have an eternity of suffering, far worse than anything experienced here on earth, in store for them, because of their sin. Turn to Christ and put your trust in Him, today.

Secondly, when we turn to Christ, we also turn to the community of believers, the local church. Look at **2 Corinthians 1:3-7**. [READ] When we suffer, and experience trials, those sufferings and trials make us fit then to comfort other in the same circumstances. Has God comforted with in Christ as you've walked through the valley of the shadow of death? Did His rod and staff *comfort* you? Then now, God is ready to use you to comfort someone else. We are never alone here. He are a community of disciples continually leaning on and depending upon each other. So let's keep our eyes open, and look for ways to comfort others the same way that God has comforted us. Have you been laid off, gone through an illness, experienced the loss of a loved one? And have you found Christ to your only hope and stay at those times? Then be on the look out for others who are experiencing the same things. It will be a big encouragement and strength for them to know that you battled the same thing, and that you are ready to go through it all again with them.

**[TAKE QUESTIONS]**

**[PRAY]**

---

<sup>3</sup> There is a lot of aberrant teaching prevalent today on this issue of God's sovereignty, and especially as it relates to suffering. Here is some suggested reading that is faithful to the Scriptures:

*The Sovereignty of God* by A. W. Pink

*The Mystery of Providence* by John Flavel

*No Place for Sovereignty* by R. K. McGregor Wright

*Behind a Frowning Providence* by John Murray

*How Long Oh Lord* by D. A. Carson

*Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility* by D. A. Carson

*Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* by J. I. Packer

*The Pleasures of God* by John Piper

Of course the best place to study these things is the Scriptures themselves: Gen. 45:5; 50:19f; Ps. 78:31-35; 105:16; 115:3; Pv. 16:1, 9, 33; 19:21; 20:12; Is. 53; Dan. 4:35; Amos 4:6-12; Hag. 2:17; John 9:1-3; 11:1-4, 14, 40-44; Rom. 8:18-39; 2 Cor. 1:8-10; 4:16-18; 12:7-10; Heb. 12:4-11; James 1:2-4; 1 Pt. 1:6f; 4:12f; Rev. 6:9-11; 7:14-17; 21:1-8.