



DID YOU KNOW?

1. Job is the first book of wisdom. In the Old Testament, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes take up this theme, and in the New Testament it appears in the Epistle of James. This literature deals with human experience in all its breadth; it is expressed in short and insightful proverbs, in essays and monologues or, as in the case of Job, in dramatic prose.
2. Although he is not named as the author of the book, Job is a historical figure. He is mentioned in Ezekiel 14:14, 20 and James 5:11. He probably lived during the time of the patriarchs, as his great age, the various geographical references in the text, and the absence of any allusion to the law, the Tabernacle and the Temple suggest.
3. In the book of Job, the very high conception of God and the considerations concerning man, Satan, justice, redemption and resurrection, show that, at that early period, revelation was already very important even before the writing of the Old Testament was undertaken.
4. The topic of the book of Job is that of God's providential and moral ways in relation to the constant problem of the suffering of a righteous man. Neither Job, who sought to justify himself, nor his three "comforters" who accused him of sin, found an answer to this problem.
5. Unbeknownst to him, Job was involved in a cosmic test, a confrontation prepared in heaven but acted out on earth. In this severe test of faith, the most upright man on earth suffered the worst misfortunes. Satan had said that people like Job love God because of the good things he gives them. But Job, on the other hand, struggled to do the impossible: to continue to believe in a loving and just God despite all the evidence against him.
6. Satan's portrayal of Job is reminiscent of the story in Genesis 3. Satan has the supernatural power to oppress people, but this is limited by God. As John Newton so aptly put it, "Satan can only use the powers at his disposal. The Bible records several other instances where Satan explicitly asked permission to attack a person, (ref. Luke 22:31-32)
7. Job categorically refused to curse God. But he did curse the day he was born (Job 3:1). In one of his speeches (Job 6), he asks for a quick death, realizing perhaps that he cannot hold onto his faith in God forever. If he died early, it would be in faith. His speeches contain some of the strongest expressions of pain in any literature.
8. Even though God generally refuted their arguments, Job's three friends still said some things that were true - others, of course, were false. Bildad appeals to common sense by indicating

that God does not reject the upright man, thus implying that Job sinned to deserve this suffering. But God had explicitly called Job a man of integrity and uprightness (Job 2:3).

9. Zophar, the least adroit of the three friends, directly accused Job, repeating the same claim that Job was being punished for a sin (Job 11). In a speech reported in chapter 12, Job acknowledges in principle that God rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked. But in his case, he knows that he is blameless. He refuted all the arguments of his friends in spite of their relevance.
10. More than any other, Job's statement in verse 15 of chapter 13 shows the depth of Job's faith and the reason for his victory in the challenge between God and Satan. Job valued his faith more than his own life. He asked for only one "hearing," an opportunity to personally confront God for an explanation.
11. In the speech reported in chapters 23 - 24, Job poignantly described the feeling of God's absence when he needed him most. God must certainly seem absent to the poor, the orphans and all those who suffer without relief, he said. Bildad responded with the shortest speech in the book (chap. 25). He wondered if a mortal who is only a maggot or a worm had the right to challenge God so courageously.
12. Unable to convince Job philosophically, Eliphaz decided to attack Job's behavior more personally (Job 22:6). His arguments were perhaps the harshest of all, and Job explicitly refuted each of them in his closing speech. (Job 29 – 31)
13. Chapter 31, which reports Job's defense, is written in a style that gave it legal significance to its hearers. Job solemnly declared his innocence in response to a series of accusations. He invoked curses upon himself if his guilt could be established. These covenants are somewhat similar to the oath we take today on the Bible promising to « tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. » They impressed Job's three friends and indeed ended the debate. Then they were joined by the new character, Elihu.
14. Elihu did not defend Job's innocence. He changes his perspective. He sees this suffering as a warning, not a punishment (Job 33). Perhaps, he suggested that God lets a man suffer to « turn them back from the pit. » Initially, however, Elihu defended God's actions: « It is unthinkable that God would do wrong, that the Almighty would pervert justice. » (Job 34 :12)
15. In his trauma, Job could not help but feel that he was a victim of God's wrath. Many people who experience similar pain have this same feeling. However, in Job's case, we know that

God was not angry with him. Rather, he had presented him to Satan « as a man who fears God and shuns evil. » (Job 1 :8)

16. Like all afflicted people, Job went through emotional cycles. He moaned, exploded, took comfort, then fell back into self-pity. He shared the views of his friends, changed his mind, and contradicted himself. And sometimes he made hopeful statements. In fact, Job's life is an example for all those who go through great suffering.
17. No one knows the true meaning of the term Leviathan (Job 40:15). That is why it is not translated in some versions of the Bible. Leviathan has similarities with the crocodile and the dragon. In other instances, the Bible describes Leviathan as a whale-like creature (Ps. 104:26), a serpent or a sea monster (Is. 27:1). God used Leviathan as a symbol of something powerful and uncontrollable.
18. Job's suffering teaches that the evils inflicted on God's servants are not always the result of a sin committed. But Job's friends started from a general theological principle in judging Job, namely that people suffer evil because of their sins, which is not necessarily the case.
19. Three of the poetic books - Job, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes – as well as some of the Psalms (1, 10, 14, 19, 37 and 90) are among the best examples of sapiential literature, i.e., literature with a wisdom theme. This form of Hebrew literature deals not only with the practical problems of life – as in Proverbs – but also with major spiritual and moral issues, such as the prosperity of the wicked (cp. Ps. 37), materialism, fatalism, pessimism (cp. Ecclesiastes), and the suffering of the righteous (cp. Job).
20. At the end of the book of Job, God revealed Himself in majesty and power (Job 38 – 41); only then did Job, that « upright and righteous man » (Job 1:8), turn from his own righteousness and humble himself: « I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes » (Job 42:6). Having discovered that he was worse in himself than any wrong he had done, Job emerged from suffering to be restored to blessedness.