

# JOB

## Study Guide

### WISDOM LITERATURE

Having finished the historical books of the Old Testament (Joshua-Esther), we now enter into the wisdom literature section (Job-Song of Solomon). What characterizes wisdom literature? I'm so glad you asked!

Jews viewed wisdom as both God-centered (Prov. 1:7) and in very practical terms. Therefore, wisdom literature focuses on practical guidance for moral behavior based on God's principles. Within wisdom literature you'll find:

- **Proverbs** – a genre expressing practical truths (thus why the book is named Proverbs!)
- **Riddles or Parables** – stories with spiritual meaning
- **Discussions** – dialogues about the problems of life

Though not specific to wisdom literature, poetry is common throughout the wisdom books. Poetry is filled with images, similes, metaphors, and exaggerations to express the main point.

### AUTHOR

The text gives no indication of who wrote the book. Though the story is *about* Job, we cannot assume he is its author. Some believe Moses may have written the book, though there is no solid evidence for that either. What we do know: the author of this book is anonymous!

### DATE

The dating of Job is equally uncertain, though the text does provide more clues for consideration:

- Job seems to have lived during the time of Abraham – 2000 to 1800 B.C.
  - No mention of Israel or the Law
  - Priest over his own household (Job 1:5)
  - Long life span (Job 42:16) more similar to that found in Genesis
  - Wealth measured in flocks and herds
- Based on language within the text, some scholars believe the book was written:
  - Around the time of Job – (2000-1800 B.C.)
  - The return from Babylonian exile – (450 B.C.)
  - When most other wisdom literature was written – (950 B.C.)

It's safer to say we don't really know, and perhaps additional archaeological evidence will be found one day to clarify the date for us. What IS safe to say is this: The story and message of Job is timeless and applicable for all who face suffering!

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

There are some who think Job is an imaginary person within a legend to teach moral lessons. However, the mention of actual names and locations of Job's friends point toward Job having been an actual person in real history. Therefore, the book should be taken as a real account of a real man, with real friends, who is facing real problems. Though much of the conversation elements between Job and his friends contain truth, it is not always properly applied truth.

## LITERARY STRUCTURE

The book reveals "behind the scenes" in a unique way and also is structured in a common form of ancient world writing: Prologue, Poetry, Epilogue. The author of Job used a similar format, demonstrating great skill in bringing words together in dramatic fashion to clearly communicate the message of life's eternal purpose.

- Prologue: **Behind the Scenes of Job** (1:1-2:13)
- Poetry: **The Debates & Answers of Job** (3:1-42:6)
- Epilogue: **God's Deliverance & Response to Job** (42:7-17)

## OBSERVATION WORDS

- |                                    |                  |
|------------------------------------|------------------|
| ▪ <b>God</b> (especially Almighty) | ▪ <b>Satan</b>   |
| ▪ <b>Jesus</b>                     | ▪ <b>How/Why</b> |
| ▪ <b>Holy Spirit</b>               | ▪ <b>Wisdom</b>  |

## SUMMARY QUESTIONS

- What did the **Lord teach YOU** through what you read & how will you apply it in your life?
- What do you learn about the **character of God**?
- What do you learn about **Satan**?
- What do you notice about the attacks Satan makes against Job and Job's response to each?
- What do Job's friends look at as proof of sin in Job's life? What sins do they accuse him of? Are they right in any of them?
- How does Job defend himself before his friends? Is he accurate in his defense?
- What does this book teach you about advising and consoling friends who are undergoing trials?
- What does this book teach you about undergoing trials yourself?
- What is the core message of God's message to Job and what is Job's response?

- **ASSIGNMENT TO TURN IN:** Look carefully again at **chapters 33-37** and answer the following:
  - What is different about Elihu's response compared to the others?
  - Who do you think Elihu represents?
  - What does Elihu say about how God speaks (outline or list it)?
  - What is the purpose of God speaking?

**KEY WORD** – How would you summarize what you've read into one word or very short phrase? Why did you choose that?

**KEY VERSE(S) & CHAPTER** – May reflect something which stood out to you or helps summarize the book. So, what are they and why?