

# NOTES AND QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP STUDY IN THE BOOK OF JOB

## PART I – CHAPTERS ONE AND TWO

### THE REAL CAUSE OF MAN'S SUFFERING

The book of Job is probably the oldest book in the Bible. Nothing in the book dates it historically but it seems likely that Job lived about the same time as Abraham, around 2000 B.C. Nowhere does it quote other Old Testament books or refer to other Old Testament characters as almost every other Old Testament book does frequently. Job is mentioned in Ezekiel 14:14,20 and again in James 5:11. We are not told whether Job wrote the book himself or someone else wrote about him. Because God inspired the book and its message,(2 Timothy 3:16) it is not important who the human writer was.

What is certain about the book of Job is that it deals with man's oldest and toughest question about God. Why does He allow suffering if He is the God of love? Much of the book deals with the foolish advice our friends still give us when we are hurting. In the last few chapters God speaks to offer us an amazing and wonderfully workable solution to the problem of suffering. If we can grasp its message the book of Job can help us and those around us to cope with pain in every sense.

1:1-3 Q.1 Uz was a rich farming area on the river Euphrates in what today is Iraq. The name Job means 'without father'. What can we reasonably guess about Job's background and early life? In what ways would he have been regarded as successful by his neighbours?

1:4,5 Q.2 His children appeared to have spent much of their time throwing extended birthday parties. What do you think of Job's performance as a husband and a father?

1:6-12 The setting for the dialogue between God and Satan seems rather strange and hard to fit into our image of heaven.

Q.3 Does Satan really sneak into heaven at times as he sneaked into the garden of Eden? Who are the sons of God? Are they angels as some translations suggest?

The answer to these questions in no way effects the message of the book but let me suggest a possible meaning to these verses. The term 'Son of God' is only ever explained as being a man in the image of God - Adam when he was first created,(Luke 3:38) Jesus on earth,(Mark 1:1) and Christians after Pentecost,(Romans 8:14-17; John 1:12). Because the Bible is consistent in the way it uses words, I assume that here (and in Genesis 6:4) it is also human believers who are described. Since in heaven we will always be in His presence it may be on earth that this scene takes place as a group of believers meet to worship God. Perhaps the Lord staged the dialogue for them to give them insight into this most difficult question of suffering.

Q.4 What do these chapters teach us about the character of Satan, his relationship with God, the limits of his power, and his objective in tempting us? Who causes suffering - God, man or Satan?

1:13-19 Q.5 What three kinds of loss does Job experience? What does each one represent in our lives? Which do you find hardest to handle? How do Luke 13:1-5 and John 9:1,2 bring out the same three problems?

1:20-22 Q.6 How does Job react at first to loss? How does his wife react? Why is it that the family of someone sick or dying often take it harder than the patient? Where does Job assume his adversity has come from? Was he right? How do we often reveal the same way of thinking about suffering?

2:11-13 Q.7 Job's three friends came from widely separate places, hundreds of miles apart. What evidence is there that their sick visiting was motivated by real love and concern? What kind of sympathy and comfort do you look for most in the face of suffering? Is silence necessarily a sign we have failed as comforters?

Q.8 Job had lost his business, family and his health. What would the neighbours say now about his success in life?

Q.9 What explanation did Jesus give for the meaning of suffering in Luke 13:1-5 and John 9:1-3?

Q.10 Old Testament believers were often blessed by God with material prosperity. What different view of riches does the New Testament present?(Luke 18:22-25, I Timothy 6:9,10, James 5:1-6, Ephesians 1:7, 2:7, 3:8,16) Why is there an apparent difference between the Old and New Testaments in this respect?

Q.11 What is the greatest thing we can do to help the people around us cope with suffering in whatever form?