

## **The Half Hour That Changes the World**

**Job**

**Book 18**

### **Basic Question behind the book:**

*How can we deal with the issue of suffering in the world today?*

### **Summary of book:**

The book of Job is a literary masterpiece and it also has strong religious significance. The framework of the book has been separated into the prologue, epilogue and the conversations in the middle. The prologue is chapter 1 - 12; the middle conversations are chapter 13:1 - 42:6 and the epilogue is considered to be chapter 42:7 - 17. The main portion of the book consists of three cycles of discussion between Job and the three friends, who come from a long way away to comfort him. While they have good intentions, they seem unable to relate theology to life. Job starts by staying faithful but, as the calamities increase, he finds himself bitter and starts questioning God. His friends don't help the matter at all and ask Job to repent. The belief of the time was that if you suffered, you surely deserved it, as you must have sinned against God. But, in the end, as God asks Job a series of questions, Job catches a glimpse of the glory of God and comes back to God in a new way.

The book concludes, as it began, with a prose narrative in which Job is restored to his former estate and more. What has been gained through this terrible ordeal? The restoration is narrated in such a way as to suggest that Job is no longer the person he was in the beginning. As so often happens in this book, there is an unintended and ironic truth in what one of his friends had said: 'His end makes his beginning small by comparison.' (8:7)

### **Vital Statistics:**

Purpose: The book of Job deals with the issue of suffering. The book of Job has to do with the most painful and unavoidable questions which can arise in human experience. The universal human question: 'Why do the righteous suffer?' is posed in Job within the context of a prior and (at least for the narrator) deeper question posed by God. 'Why are the righteous pious?'

Author and Dating: The author and the date of the book are unknown. It has the flavour of the ancient times. It is possible that the story was told for many centuries, before it was composed. Some want to date it between 600 and 400 BC, while others suggest 950 BC or 250 BC.

Setting: It seems like the story has been removed from a specifically Israelite setting. It is, however, imagined that the story takes place in Israel. Some suggest that the location is the south-east of Israel and the area is called Uz. Others suggest that the story took place in exile. The setting in this book is not important, because by not having a specific place it focuses on the problems raised in the book and how they relate to all human existence.

### **Other Reflections:**

Jesus in Job: Jesus is prefigured in the living Redeemer who will stand upon the earth. Job also prefigures the incarnation and the suffering of God made man. Most Christians feel that all of our questions about God and suffering must be seen in the light of the cross, because God was there, amidst the pain.

### **Key text:**

*"I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth".  
(19:25)*