

## The Answerer

Answering children's questions

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*The Patient Job*, Gerard Seghers (1591–1651).  
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# He's got the patience of Job!

Read: Job 1:1 to 42:17 (*The Living Bible* version)

**T**HIS is 'theanswerer's' favourite Bible story because it exposes (tells the truth about) God, Satan, (the devil), and a rich and good man with three quite 'unhelpful' friends.

You may have heard someone say: "He's got the patience of Job." and not understood what it meant. Well this story will tell you what it means.

Please understand dear reader that there is no date on The Book of Job and nobody knows who wrote it. Bible scholars

think it is very old indeed- maybe even around the time of Abraham; but at least 2,500 years old but it could have been older. Also that makes me (www.theanswerer) curious as to how Job knew in his heart so much about God because he could resist (turn back) the arguments put up by his friends that he must have done some bad things...but he had not! There were no Bible colleges then—and no books then either. The Synagogue (Jewish church) had the only written copies of 'The Torah' –or The Books of Moses and these were read out on the Sabbath by the Rabbi,(teacher) and most people remembered them. They wrote on leather, or, after much weaving and hammering and drying it-parchment- made of reeds from the riverside.

From Job: *"In the land of Uz (in the east of Jordan) there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright, he feared God and shunned (kept away) from evil. He had seven sons and three daughters and he owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke (pairs) of oxen and five hundred donkeys and had many servants. He was the greatest man among all the people of the East."* (Jb.1:1-3 NIV)

This man's patience was severely tested and he was never told who did all the awful things to him – but he never cursed or blamed God, and he receives an unusually amazing reward for his patience in suffering and never giving up on his belief in the goodness of God.

*"One day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan (or 'the accuser') came along with them."* It must have been some sort of regular meeting. God asked Satan: *"Where have you come from?"* His reply: *"From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it."* (Job.1:6-8) That's what Satan does – looking out for someone to attack (make trouble) for.

There now begins a dialogue (talking) between God and Satan that goes on for the first two chapters. God draws Satan's attention to Job who shuns evil, prays daily and prays especially for his children in case they have sinned (done wrong) and Job is also very rich.

"Sure," says Satan, "He is 'Good' and rich because you help him so much. Take away his wealth and he will curse you to your face." "OK." said God, "Everything he has is in your hands but do not lay a hand on him."

So, very soon after that meeting, Job's ten children were all killed in a violent wind storm while having a birthday party. All his animals were killed, stolen or burnt to death as were most of his servants.

Job did not accuse, or curse God at all because of this awful loss.

There came a second 'Meeting' and Satan was there with the angels again. God said to him "...and he (Job) still maintains his integrity (being without serious fault) in spite what you did to him in all his losses."

"Skin for skin." Satan said "But stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones and he will surely curse you to your face."

The Lord said to Satan: "Very well then, he is in your hands but you must spare his life." (Job 2:6 NIV)

"So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head." (v 7)

If Job had got angry and cursed and blamed God for his troubles Satan would have been able to tell everyone that one of God's favourite people had 'turned' and cursed God – meaning that if things go wrong God cannot be trusted to help – a great victory for Satan.

Have you ever felt awful with not a thing going right? All of us have sometime and Job felt that too with almost everything he owned gone.

Job went and sat on the ashes (rubbish tip) and took a piece of broken pottery and scraped his hundreds of sores (maybe they were boils). Even his wife suggested that he: "...curse God and die." Remember, her ten children were dead too!!

An unusual and amazing word from Job to her: "You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God and not trouble? In all of this, Job did not sin in what he said." (did not curse God). (Job 2:10 NIV)

Now trouble comes from three of Job's caring friends (caring maybe but convinced that their personal opinion of Job was right, but it was not!)

His three friends heard of Job's troubles. They were Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite. These three men agreed to travel together and sympathise with Job and journeyed to visit him. Remember in those days: no telephones, no TV, newspapers or cars – news travelled slowly by people telling each other the latest news.

When they arrived and saw Job they were silent for seven days. So totally stunned, appalled and sorry were they at his losses that they sat down in silence for a week!! (life moved very slowly in those days).

They thought that God was punishing Job for some sins that he had committed and he had kept quiet about it. **THEY WERE WRONG!**

After the seven days the three of them began speak – to try to persuade Job to confess (to admit his wrong doing) and God would restore him to health and wealth. And they kept it up for days – maybe weeks.

Job refused to agree!!! "I have heard all this before. What miserable comforters all of you are. Won't you ever stop your flow of foolish words." (Job 16:1 TLB)

The three friends took turns with long and often boring speeches about dreams or stories, to inform Job as to how much they knew of God's ways. On and on they went for 30 chapters: Chapter 3 to chapter 37.

At one stage Job got sarcastic and said: "Yes, I know you know so much – all knowledge will cease when you die." Job mocking his friends.

In another part of the story, a very high point I believe, Job responds: "I know that my redeemer lives and in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God. I myself will see him with my own eyes – I and not another. How my heart yearns within me." (Job 19:25-27 NIV)

That verse has been put into music and song in an oratorio in 'Handel's Messiah'. Most beautiful indeed and can be found on the WWW U-tube 'I know that my redeemer liveth.' It is a soprano solo and

beautiful indeed. There are several most beautiful versions.

Dear reader, think upon these words of Job. One, maybe two thousand years before Jesus came and told 'Us' about God and the future heaven, Job knew about it!! That almost defies our understanding but no words in the Bible are 'useless'. God put them there – for our benefit. And 'theanswerer' longs to 'see him with my own eyes' too. Do you?

One writer about the book of Job wrote: 'Maybe God let Job know about the sure, but distant future, to help him get through a most difficult and hurtful time.' I agree!

Page two and three in my story is an attempt to summarise the 35 chapters on how Job's three friends tried to convince Job to 'Confess' his many sins – and all would be well. Well they were wrong indeed.

Finally in chapter 38 to 42 God's voice calls from the heavens to challenge Job – and his three 'Friends' (comforters) to just who God is AND HIS CREATIVE POWER!! Job confesses that he knows nothing really and God tells the three 'Friends': "I am angry with you and your two friends, for you have not been right in what you have said about me as my servant Job was." (Job 42:7 TLB)

Then God demands seven bulls and seven rams be sacrificed for their sins – "*And my servant Job will pray for you I will accept his prayer for you and I won't destroy you as I should because of your sin, your failure to speak rightly of my servant Job.*" (Job 42:8 TLB)

Now comes the best part: "*So the Lord blessed Job at the end of his life with more than at the beginning. For now he had 14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, 1,000 teams of oxen and 1,000 female donkeys. God gave him seven more sons and three more daughters...And in all the land there were no other girls as lovely as the daughters of Job and he put them in his will along with their brothers.*"  
Three most beautiful girls: 'Wow!

Job lived 140 years after that, living to see his grandchildren and great-grandchildren too. Then at last he died, an old, old man, after living a long, good life." (Job 42:14-17.TLB)

A joke from 'theanswerer': A reporter from *The Jerusalem Post* newspaper called at Satan's home to ask him if he had a comment on Job's new life, his wealth and ten children. Satan pulled an angry face, refused to answer and slammed the door!! Ha,ha,ha!