

The Cross in the Old Testament – Suffering (STUDY NOTES)

The fall and its consequences ...

TEXT	SUMMARY	THEME
Genesis 3:16-19	The Fall affects both humans and the environment (Cosmos).	Eve and painful childbirth; Adam and an unproductive land. Outside of Eden, the Fall has brought trials, sorrows and sufferings upon humankind.
Genesis 4:12	A civilisation and its cost. Urban life.	Cain's labours as a tiller of the ground (cf. Abel the shepherd – the move from nomadism to agriculturalism and the cities that depend on the farms.)
Genesis 7 and 8	The Noah Narratives	God punishes global wickedness in the Flood but then relents for the future. Notice how faith is changing its character. The idea of a covenant emerges.
Genesis 11:1-9	The Tower of Babel	Humanity divided on account of pride (the Ziggurats – late 3 rd millennium B.C.)
Genesis 12-25	The Abrahamic Narrative	Salvation History begins with the divine election of the Patriarchs and the gathering of the people of God.

The existential question of suffering, innocent or otherwise ...

1. Egyptian bondage as slaves (innocent suffering). Joseph's favour with Pharaoh gives way in the next generation to exploitation. Why? This is no fault of the Hebrews, READ: Exodus 1:1-14. God, therefore, protects them and liberates them to seek out the promised land.
2. Psalms: varying historical contexts, both national and personal.

For example, in Psalm 136(137) we have the exiles in Babylon lamenting their condition ... NOT as innocents, according to the prophet Jeremiah. God is punishing them for their apostasy, yet they cry out to the Lord notwithstanding, mindful of the covenant which, according to the prophecies of Ezekiel must be refashioned to transform hearts and lives. READ Psalm 136 (137).

Other Psalms consider the old questions as to why the wicked flourish and the righteous suffer and perish as innocents. READ: Psalm 48(49); Psalm 72(73) and Psalm 21(22), the latter messianic and cruciform as well as existential (Cf. Isaiah 52:13-53:12)

3. Personal suffering of the righteous (innocent). The whole of Job. READ: Peake, Ch. 5. Fr Emmanuel has written this in our Old Testament Study Guide concerning the first two chapters in Job: -

Job 1-2

Content Summary

The righteous father Job cares well for his family and offers sacrifices to God on their behalf (1.1-5). God gives Satan permission to tempt Job by destroying his children and property, but not to touch him personally (1.6-12). However, Job does "not sin or charge God with wrong" (1.13-22). God then gives Satan permission to afflict Job "with loathsome sores;" and still, Job does not protest, (2.1-8), but his wife does (2.9-10). Job's friends console him silently (2.9-13). The editors of ACAS OT VI Job¹ write: "Even though Job does not lose his hope and does not curse God, he wonders why he had to suffer such calamity..... The unknown author of the book of Job ... [invites] others to accept humbly and bravely all that God decides even if the reason for God's behaviour appears incomprehensible" [p. xvii].

Historical Context

The editors of ACAS OT VI Job write: "After [the Jews] had lost the concept of the collective responsibility of the entire people in their relationship with God, there appeared in their culture the prevalence (already from the time of Isaiah and Ezekiel) of a concept of individual responsibility. Each person was called to give reason for only his or her actions. This certainly created a series of difficulties deriving from this new concept of the relationship between the individual human being and God. [Job is not a Jew; and] the questions proposed by the book of Job are addressed ... to men and women from any time and any place. This also explains, even today, the reason for the great interest raised by this work...." [p. xvii].

New Testament References

In "The Trial of Job: Orthodox Christian Reflections on the Book of Job",² Father Patrick Henry Reardon notes that St James "is the only New Testament writer to mention Job explicitly ... [and] James provides the traditional Christian approach to Job - namely, the theme of the just man who is tried in his faith." Furthermore, Father Patrick points out that in James 5.10-11 the apostle mentions Job as a prophet "'who spoke in the name of the Lord.'... We must not think ... that the Church's interest in the book of Job is only moral. A yet deeper sense of the book is discerned in the practice of the Church to read Job during Holy Week.... [The Church regards the] patient Job as a figure and type of Jesus, supremely the Just Man suffering and sorely tried. Job is, wrote Gregory the Great, 'a type of the Redeemer" [pp. 7-8].

¹ [Amazon.co.uk : Ancient Christian Commentary on Scriptures \(IVP\)](https://www.amazon.co.uk/Ancient-Christian-Commentary-on-Scriptures-IVP/dp/0830828070)

² [Trial of Job: Orthodox Christian Reflections on the Book of Job: Amazon.co.uk: Reardon, Patrick Henry](https://www.amazon.co.uk/Trial-of-Job-Orthodox-Christian-Reflections-on-the-Book-of-Job-Amazon.co.uk-Reardon-Patrick-Henry/dp/0830828070)