

Job 1:1-3

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/job/job-1/job-11-3/>

Job is a righteous man who fears God. By all accounts he is prosperous. He has ten children, is incredibly wealthy, and owns multiple businesses.

The book of Job opens by introducing its primary human character: *Job*. *Job* is introduced by the statement *There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job* (vs 1). The context of Job informs us that the *land of Uz* was in the vicinity of the land of the Sabeans (vs 15) and the Chaldeans (vs 17). That would place *Uz* somewhere in the Fertile Crescent, the cradle of civilization. The Fertile Crescent is the area between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, in the Middle East. ([See Map](#))

As for when Job lived, we do not know. The text does not say. Most scholars conclude he lived in the days after Noah but before the Law of Moses. Some of the evidence for this theory comes from one of Job's friends referencing evil men being washed away by a river (or as some translations render it, a "flood"—Job 22:15-16). Job lived for multiple centuries, made sacrifices on his own as Noah and Abraham did (without a priest), and gave his daughters an inheritance equal to his sons' (Job 42:15, something not found in the Mosaic Law). Thus, it seems he lived during what is known as "the Age of the Patriarchs."

The story goes on to describe Job, telling us *and that man was blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil*. As we will see throughout the story that unfolds in Job, Job never loses his moral integrity (Job 1:22; 2:10). He will endure being tempted by Satan through tragedy as well as resisting discouragement from his wife. That Job was *blameless* and *upright* is the direct result of his decision to live as *fearing God*. To fear God is to listen to God, and believe that what God tells us is of utmost importance. Listening to God allows us to see through a lens of reality, and understand that ignoring God and His way is self-destructive.

Fearing God is like fearing gravity—we understand that ignoring gravity will lead to our own harm. We can choose to believe gravity is not real and step off a balcony, but we will hit the ground anyway—we choose our own harm because we failed to respect physical laws. God also made the world with moral laws. Respecting the moral cause-effect God created leads us to our best possible outcome (Proverbs 14:27). Fearing the Lord leads to following God and His life-giving ways.

Job recognized that God is God, and that to live apart from God and His ways was to depart from all that is good and beneficial in life. Therefore, Job lived as constantly *turning away from evil*. Job understood that choosing *evil* would lead to his own destruction just as certainly as would choosing to defy gravity. God is just, and He will enforce all moral cause-effect embedded in His creative design (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

Job's story continues, and we are now told that Job was *the greatest of all the men of the east* (vs 3). The phrase *the east* here begs the question "east of where?" Since the earth is round, to say

something is “east” requires a marker to determine the center from which “east” and “west” are determined. It is inferred that “east” here is consistent with the marker that is still used globally to determine what is “east” and what is “west”: Jerusalem.

Even in the Genesis account, it states that Eden was “toward the east” (Genesis 2:8). This indicates that God established a geographic center even before He created humans. At the time Moses wrote Genesis, the Israelites were not in the land of Israel. This infers that Jerusalem was already the apple of God’s eye at the dawn of creation. This is consistent with the description of a new heaven and earth, which will have a new Jerusalem as its centerpiece (Revelation 21:1-2).

Also, Genesis says the Tigris River at the time of Eden flowed “east of Assyria.” Moses probably mentions “Assyria” as a marker familiar to the people of his time to describe the location of an area at a time prior to the creation of Adam and Eve. So the *east* appears to be the land of the Fertile Crescent, where civilization began. That Job was the *greatest of all the men of the east* likely meant, therefore, that he was the greatest of all men at the time.

The text tells us the resume of Job, the things that caused him to be the *greatest of all the men of the east*. The list begins with his family. Job was blessed, as *Seven sons and three daughters were born to him* (vs 2). It is worth noting that Job’s ten children are listed first in the list of things that made him great. This would indicate that God views children as a blessing, and a potential source of greatness (Psalm 127:3-5).

In an era of family enterprises, children would also have the practical benefit of providing a source of reliable and aligned managers. In the subsequent section we will see that Job treated his children as a special treasure, and was intentional in investing in their lives (Job 1:4-5).

The narrative continues, and lists Job’s material assets. We might think of this as being presented like the assets of a balance sheet: *His possessions also were:*

- 7,000 sheep,
- 3,000 camels,
- 500 yoke of oxen,
- 500 female donkeys,
- and very many servants;

The list concludes with the assertion *and that man was the greatest of all the men of the east* (vs 3).

We can infer some things about Job’s assets. In order to support 7,000 sheep, Job would have likely possessed a substantial area of range land in order to feed the sheep. The 7,000 sheep placed Job firmly in the category of having a large ranch management enterprise.

Job also managed 3,000 camels. This might infer that Job had a large trading operation. Camels were used as a means of long range transport. Perhaps Job had a substantial trading operation, transporting goods on the “silk route” that spanned from the far east to Egypt. Job might have been able to not only raise camels, but also to have at any point in time a significant number of

caravans running routes. If Job managed such a large trading operation, it is likely he also conducted some sort of banking enterprise. If so, that means Job would take possession of goods (bank them) then transport them to the point of sale as a natural part of a trade business.

The possession of *3,000 camels* placed Job firmly in the category of being the modern equivalent of a “trucking magnate.” Perhaps he also owned the largest trading firm, and even the largest trade bank of the era.

Further, Job owned *500 yoke of oxen*. A *yoke of oxen* refers to a pair of *oxen*. *Oxen* were used to power plows, and short-haul freight. If we assume that one pair of *oxen* at that time could cultivate 100 acres of land per year, this would infer that Job managed a farming operation that spanned 50,000 acres. This is a substantial farming operation, even by current standards. It could be that Job used his ability to transport goods in caravans of camels to export the crops grown in his large farming operation.

Job also owned *500 female donkeys*. It would seem that since the count here is of the *female* members of the herd, that this was a donkey breeding operation. So Job could feasibly sell several hundred donkeys each year. In that era, *donkeys* might have been used in a number of ways. When we see donkeys in the Old Testament, they often are used for domestic transportation, like we might use an automobile in the modern era.

For example, Abraham used a donkey to carry supplies for he and Isaac (Genesis 22:3-5). Abraham’s sons used donkeys to carry grain from Egypt (Genesis 42:26). Moses used a donkey to transport his wife and son to Egypt (Exodus 4:20). We might think of Job’s donkey-breeding operation somewhat like owning a modern “car-manufacturing facility” in the modern era, together with an “auto-dealership.”

In order to manage this vast commercial enterprise, this ancient billionaire had *very many servants*. Today’s equivalent might be “a large number of employees.”

All this put together made Job *that man who was the greatest of all the men of the east* (vs 3).

It appears that Job was the man who had both the greatest character and the most possessions of his era. We will see that Job appears to be God’s favorite person on the earth at that time. So it will be that the drama will unfold where God will ridicule Satan because Job is so great, and Satan will accuse Job and gain permission to test him—a test which Job passes with flying colors.

Thus will begin a heavenly drama that will be told to us, the readers, but that Job would have been unaware of in the moment. In getting to peer into this cosmic drama, we will see and learn the great opportunity we have as humans to come to know God by faith in this life.

Biblical Text

There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job; and that man was blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil. ² Seven sons and three daughters were

born to him. ³ His possessions also were 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 female donkeys, and very many servants; and that man was the greatest of all the men of the east.