

TEXT DRIVEN PREACHING WORKSHOP – OCTOBER 8, 2018

THE PERSPECTIVE OF JOB 1-2 FROM THE NARRATOR – J. Denny Autrey

The Importance of the Literary Analysis of Job:

In the early part of the 18th century, methods of the critical analysis of the text were formulated by HB Witter (1711) and furthered by Frenchman Jean Astruc (1753). They developed the aspect of the two creation accounts coming from the YHWH's (Jehovist) and the Elohist. Thus the **J and E concept was established yet neither man denied Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch.**ⁱ

It was not until the mid-19th century the Documentary Hypothesis furthered added the elements of **D (Deuteronomist material)** and the **P (Priestly material)** but along with these additions the question of Mosaic authorship increased.

These two elements were added through the following process. In 1853, Hupfeld brought forth the proposal that Genesis was developed by two different Elohist sources, the first was the author of Genesis 1-19 and the second Genesis 20-50. He is also credited with the idea of the use of redactors who assembled or edited portions of the texts. He too affirmed a denial of Mosaic authorship stating that the **Deuteronomy material was assigned to the time of the Josiah's revival in Jerusalem (622 BC).**ⁱⁱ

The final aspect of the Hypothesis was added by Karl H. Graf in the 1860's culminating in the summary of all aspects of the Documentary Hypothesis in 1877 by Julius Wellhausen who said that "according to the historical and prophetic books of the OT, the priestly legislation of the middle books of the Pentateuch (Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers) was unknown in pre-exilic time. Therefore, the **P became associated with this view.**

The final arrangement of the Documentary Hypothesis formulated by Wellhausen is summarized in this manner:

1. The earliest part of the Pentateuch came from two originally independent documents, the Jehovist (850 BC) and the Elohist (750 BC).
2. From there the Jehovist compiled a narrative work (650 BC).
3. Deuteronomy material came in Josiah's time (622 BC) and its author incorporated this into the Jehovist work.
4. The Priestly Legislation in the Elohist document was largely the work of Ezra and is referred to as the Priestly Document. A later editor revised and edited the conglomeration of documents by about 200 BC to the form the extant Pentateuch we have today.ⁱⁱⁱ

Thus, the **DOCUMENTARY HYPOTHESIS BECAME KNOWN AS THE JEDP THEORY**. Even though Wellhausen was the one who popularized what was known as “source splitting,” it is generally **JOHANN SEMLER (1725-91)** who is credited as the Father of the technique that specializes in treating Scripture as the object of Higher Criticism and historical scrutiny. Many scholars followed suit in accepting SEMLER's approach as he declared, “The root of the evil (in theology) is the interchangeable use of the terms ‘Scriptures’ and ‘the Word of God.’” The result of such thinking was a distinction which developed whereas the Scriptures came to be viewed as any other book, and not the WORD of GOD. As the principles of biblical criticism continued to developed by the early 20th Century, Neo-orthodoxy which generally accepts biblical criticism began to coin the phrase the Scriptures are not the Word of God but only contain the Word of God. The Bible becomes the Word of God to us as we encounter its truth.

The principles of biblical criticism were applied and as a result, scholars began to deny the **continuity of the book of JOB, specifically the unity and integrity of the text.**

But as one applies the principles of literary analysis to Job, one observes that there is great unity and integrity in the entire book. Some scholars, such as John Hayes, want to separate the middle (Job 3-Job 42:6, Hebrew poetry) from the beginning (Job 1-2) and the end (Job 42:7-ff). “The Prologue and the Epilogue may have once circulated in Israel as a folk narrative.”^{iv}

This is the sentiment of many who have accepted “Source splitting” as Rudolph Rendtorff explains:

There is much to be said for assuming that the narrative framework first had an independent existence. The Narrative framework (Prologue and Epilogue) often used to be called a “folk book.” In the meantime, however, its cultured and developed narrative art has been recognized and it has been termed a didactic wisdom narrative (Muller, 1977). There is argument as to whether the narrative had its present form and present extent from the very beginning. Some exegetes assume that the two scenes in heaven were added later or that the figure of Satan was inserted at a secondary stage so the originally YHWH himself caused Job’s suffering. **However, the narrative can no longer be detached from its unction as a framework, so that all such attempts at reconstruction remain hypothetical.**^v

In response to such an erroneous attempt at restructuring or denying the unity and integrity of Job, H. H. Rowley has rightly stated concerning the denial of the Prologue and Epilogue, **“Of this there is no evidence but the futile brain of the modern scholar.”**^{vi} He does an excellent job arguing that such presuppositions are without any evidence to substantiate their conclusions. He clarifies the utter futility of their denial with these words,

Without some Prologue the book is unintelligible, and if it be supposed that a different Prologue once stood here, the disappearance needs to be accounted for. If it was more relevant than the present Prologue, its replacement is hard to understand; if less relevant, the inability of the brilliant author of the Dialogue to compose a suitable introduction would be remarkable. On the other hand, without some Epilogue the book would be incomplete. If originally there were neither Prologue nor Epilogue, Job’s suffering would be unaccounted for and without beginning or end.^{vii}

Norman Habel's assessment of the unity and integrity of Job adds to the validity of Rowley's analysis with the following statement,

The preceding analysis of the narrative plot of the book of Job reveals an underlying structure which gives coherence to the work as a literary whole. Prologue, dialogue speeches, and Epilogue are integrated into a total artistic work through this plot structure. This unity, however, intends beyond the narrative plot to include terminological, thematic, and literary features. The integrity of the work is evident in its overall construction, the setting of its characters, and the interrelationship of its several parts.^{viii}

THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK OF JOB

The book of Job has been divided into two main divisions with subdivisions based on the dialogue of each of the related characters presented by the author or Narrator. These divisions consist of the Prologue (Job 1:1-2:13) and the Epilogue (Job 42:1-17) in the form of Hebrew prose and the extended dialogue (Job 3:1-42:6) in Hebrew poetic form. With this in mind, it must be noted that it is the work of the Narrator that the stage is set for understanding the plot and structure of the text. The entire structure of the work can be seen as a series of speeches with the Narrator speaking through the prose of the Prologue and the Epilogue and the characters speaking in poetic form in the dialogue of the story. Therefore, in order to properly interpret the work one must take seriously the literary devices and elements such as the Narrator, the scene, the technique of plot analysis, dialogue, repetition of words and phrases, and point of view. These elements are masterfully examined and explained in Walter C. Kaiser's, *Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament, A Guide for the Church*. Used properly as described the interpreter of biblical truth will come to a clearer understanding for a proper approach for preparing text-driven sermons. In developing the unity and integrity of the book of Job, one must begin with the Narrator as he unfolds the setting and plot for whole story of Job in the Prologue (Job 1-2).

My assigned task is to evaluate the Prologue (Job 1-2) from the perspective of the Narrator. A proper understanding of the Narrator's Prologue is essential to an explanation of the dialogue and the Epilogue.

A SUGGESTED OUTLINE:

- I. The Prologue: 1:1-2:13
 - a. Job introduced - 1:1-5
 - i. The introduction of Job's character
 - ii. The introduction of Job's influence and family
 - iii. The verification of Job's spirit of worship
 - b. Job tested – 1:6-2:13
 - i. The first accusation of the Adversary – 1:6-12
 - ii. Job's integrity tested through the loss of his family and wealth – 1:13-22
 - iii. The second accusation of the Adversary – 2:1-6
 - iv. Job's integrity tested through personal sickness and suffering – 2:7-10
 - c. The coming of the counselors – 2:11-13

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF THE TEXT – JOB 1-2 – The Prologue – We must first not an important literary device employed by the Narrator, he has woven two stories together into one and the reader is able to see that this one story has a twofold aspect in the fact that it takes place both on earth and in heaven.

- I. THE PROLOGUE OF THE BOOK OF JOB – 1:1-2:13
 - a. Job is introduced – 1:1-5 – the Narrator and the first scene – an earthly perspective
 - i. The central character is a man from UZ – unknown place, (this is a region, not a city, sometime connected to Aram) but the statement reveals much:
 1. Time frame – most scholars place the time of the story in the patriarchal period, citing the absence of any reference to the covenant or the law
 2. Two facts seem to verify this reality :

- a. Job acts as the family priest -- v. 5
 - b. No reference to a sanctuary
- 3. Further reference to the fact that Job is not an Israelite since he is from the land of UZ and therefore we should not expect such references to law, covenant or priest and sanctuary
- 4. He is a man in his middle years who has a full family (7 sons and 3 daughters) yet young enough to have 10 more children, is known as a man of considerable substance and influence (greatest man of all the East)
 - a. These numbers in Near Eastern literature often indicate an ideal family. NOTE: The gods of Baal and Mot are said to have “SEVEN ASSISTANTS –LADS” and Baal has three daughters. It is also noted that the King of Keret from Ugarit, which has been compared to the book of Job, is said to have lost everything when a “seventh son” falls by the sword.
 - b. His substance was viewed as a sign that he was blessed by God as later reflected in the Pentateuch – Deuteronomy 28 and the Psalms – Psalm 1
- 5. He is a man of moral and spiritual integrity – “he is blameless and upright” – he was not sinless but was a pious and moral man “who feared God and shunned evil”
 - a. His integrity extends to the spiritual well-being of his family – v. 5 – “He would rise early in the morning” – a Hebrew idiom for “a conscientious act” – this was his normal custom, a life-long habit.
 - b. “burnt offerings” – some form of sacrifice that would be pleasing to God
- b. The testing of Job – 1:6-12 – A change in scenes – the heavenly court –
 - i. “sons of God came to present themselves” – 38:7 – reference to the morning stars that sing before the Lord – This scene is set in heaven before the “divine council” which would have been well known in the Near Eastern literature. The Narrator does not refer to heaven but to the fact that this scene is in the “presence of the Lord.”
 - ii. Satan – THE ADVERSARY – we should not read too much of our NT understanding back into this early scene of the OT text. It is a gradual revelation that shows who Satan is but without question but the picture given here is of one who is committed to the downfall and destruction of righteous and godly people.
 - iii. The Adversary’s accusation – v. 8 – “blameless and upright” – we find that the description of Job in 1:1 is in reality the declaration of the Lord himself and that he adds to the integrity of Job by proclaiming that he is

the Lord “servant” and then God sets in motion the drama that is to unfold in the book. God is drawing attention to the character of Job.

- iv. The question of the Book – 1:9 – “Does Job serve God for nothing?” – In other words, is Job only good because of what he can get out of it? This question is the at the center of the whole discussion and it is addressed to the reader, to ALL – WHY DO WE SERVE GOD?
 1. Satan’s argument is that very question, Job only serves you because you have blessed him, take away the blessings and prosperity and HE WILL CURSE YOU TO YOUR FACE.
 2. Only problem Satan has misunderstood Job’s personal communion with God – He has a relationship with God – He does not use his faith – HE LIVES HIS FAITH!
 3. From Satan’s own declaration he acknowledges God’s sovereign power and authority – even over himself – “Stretch out your hand” – THIS ANSWERS THE QUESTION OF DUALISM – WALT DISNEY – HE WAS A DUALIST – the belief that there is the battle between good and evil, between God and the devil, between the Holy Spirit and the demonic forces and that they are equal but the REALITY IS GOD IS SOVEREIGN AND IN CONTROL AND SATAN IS ALWAYS ONLY AN ADVERSARY WHO IS ON A CHAIN. “and he went out from the presence of the Lord”
- v. Scene Change – 1:13 – Back to the earthly setting and the Narrator has allowed us to see and hear all that has transpired and we also know that Job knows nothing of the conversation or event. There come the disasters:
 1. An outside attack on the herds and servants – 1:14-15 – the Sabeans – the small animals for farming and clothing
 2. The “fire of God from heaven” – 1:16 – probably lightning
 3. A second outside attack – 1:17 – “the Chaldeans” – the large animals for travel and commerce
 4. A tornado has destroyed the house where your whole family were gathered and all are dead – 1:18-19
 5. These events bring great grief and mourning but NO CHANGE OF ATTITUDE ON JOB’S PART BUT A DESIRE TO WORSHIP GOD AND YET IN UTTER BROKENNESS – 1:20-22
 - a. Job has proved Satan wrong, Job did not curse God but rather his first instinct was to worship God!
 - b. “he tore his cloths, and shaved his head” – Near Eastern form of true mourning
 - c. His blamelessness and integrity remains – 1:22
- vi. Scene change – back to the heavenly court – 2:1-6
 1. The heavenly scene is almost as exact as before with three exceptions:
 - a. Satan presents himself -- 1-2 – just as before

- b. God adds to his evaluation of Job – “he stills holds fast his integrity” – 2:3
 - c. God states the foundation of the argument of the rest of the book – “even though you incited me against him, WITHOUT A CAUSE” – 2:3
 - 2. The Adversary doesn’t relent – 2:4 – “skin for skin” – difficult verse to translate – possibly we have only scratched the surface, possibly – “we have only gone skin deep”
 - a. If you touch his flesh and bones – take away his health – HE WILL SURELY CURSE YOU TO YOUR FACE – 2:5
 - 3. God allows the adversary’s request and gives him authority to bring sickness to his body and impact his whole life – 2:6
 - a. Job is afflicted by Satan with an intolerable condition – boils from the top of his head to the bottom of his feet – 2:7
 - b. Job removes himself to a place of mourning and even death, some say he has joined those who have leprosy at the ash heap outside the city gates
 - c. HE HAS LOST EVERYTHING – EVEN HIS HEALTH, GOD’S SERVANT SITS ALONE IN TOTAL SUFFERING
 - i. The author/Narrator has brought us full circle in the faith walk of Job. He has seen it all:
 - 1. War from the Sabeans and Chaldeans
 - 2. Destitution from the loss of his livestock
 - 3. Bereavement from the loss of his children
 - 4. Humiliation at the total change in his wealth and influence from rich to poor
 - 5. Depression is next and we see it in Chapter 3
 - ii. The ultimate betrayal – even Job’s wife adds her great words of encouragement – “Curse God and die”
 - 4. Job stands fast – 2:10 – His integrity remains – “In all this Job did not sin”
- vii. The final scene – 2:11-13
 - 1. The coming of the friends – of all that they did and said, as we shall see was wrong – their first act is one of true friendship
 - a. They came to where he was
 - b. They sat with him
 - c. They weep with him
 - d. They grieved with him in sackcloth and ashes
 - e. They remained in silence with him for seven days
 - 2. This is true friendship – Glenn Rossman

II. THE PURPOSE OF THE PROLOGUE

THE VOICE OF THE NARRATOR

It is without question that we simply note from the onset, the Narrator is an integral part of the narrative. The first and most important aspects that is noticed about the Prologue is the literary device the authors uses to explain the setting for the story, he has masterfully taken two stories and has intricately woven them together, one taking place on earth and the other taking place in the heavenly court. As Kaiser reminds us, “point of view refers to the perspective from which the story is told. Usually it is the prerogative of the Narrator to express the stance or viewpoint from which the story is being told.”^{ix} In most cases the Narrator remains inconspicuous but in the Prologue, as one reads the biblical narrative, he/she immediately becomes conscious of the Narrators presence as the story unfolds. In the book of Job, one witnesses the Narrator’s omniscience and omnipresence and with that conscience awareness the reader too knows everything and is present everywhere as the Prologue develops with the interaction between God and Satan. It begins with the ease in which the Narrator weaves the earthly and heavenly narrations together. In order to illustrate the point of the omniscience and omnipresence in Job, the Narrator begins his narrative with an earthly scene (1:1-5), then moves to the heavenly scene of dialogue with accusation (1:6-12), and again moves back to an earthly scene of catastrophic events with regard to family and possessions (1:13-22) then once more to the heavenly court and still another accusation (2:1-6), and finally he returns to earth again (2:7-13). The most notable evidence of the Narrators omniscience is revealed in the direct dialogue of God as He expresses His opinion of Job’s character, “he is blameless and upright; a man who fears God and shuns evil” (1:8). It is the Narrator that introduced the idea of Job character as he

describes him in verse one but the reality of the Narrators depiction of Job in verse one is affirmed by God Himself in verse eight.

The Introductions of the Characters

It is also the Narrator that introduces the characters of the whole story. The four main characters that carry the discourse throughout the narration are Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar (2:11). Three other characters are revealed in the Prologue – God, Satan and Job’s wife.

The importance of the introduction of the characters in the Prologue also reaffirms the unity and integrity of the book as a whole. Another significant feature of the Prologue is the nature of the conflicts that are expressed between Yahweh and Satan which begin in dialogue form are the precedents for extended dialogue conflicts, first between Job and his friends and then ultimately between Job and his God. These continuing dialogues of the conflicts presented constitute further evidence between the continuity of the Prologue-Epilogue and body of the text as a whole.

The Use of Repetition

A final literary technique used by the Narrator to affirm the unity and integrity of the book of Job, a common tool with regard to Hebrew narrative, is the use of repetition.^x Sidney Greidanus adds the following observation with regard to the technique, “Repetition is a favored device in Hebrew narrative. It ranges from the repetition of words to the repetition of whole speeches.”^{xi} Within the Prologue as well as through the book, the Narrator’s use of repetition is significant. For example, “This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil” (1:1, 8; 2:3); “In all this, Job did not sin” (1:22; 2:10), and Satan went out from the presence of the LORD” (1:12; 2:7). These themes and phrases used by the Narrator are carried throughout text in the various dialogues.

A good example of that reality is the use of “blameless and upright.” The Narrator establishes the character and integrity of Job in the Prologue which is an affirmation that comes from God and yet Job is completely unaware because it is only expressed through the heavenly dialogue between God and Satan. The same theme of Job’s character is questioned by his friends within the dialogue and yet Job is relentless in defending his integrity and uprightness as expressed in Job 27:2-6. The subject of “blameless and upright” presented in the Prologue (1:1, 8, 2:3) is revisited in the dialogue (8:20; 9:20, 21, 22). Other words that are introduced by the Narrator in the Prologue and repeated within the dialogue are words such as: “fear” (1:1, 8, 9; 6:14; 28:20); “hedge” (1:10; 3:23); “hand” (1:11; 2:5; 6:9; 10:7, 8; 12:9; 19:21; 23:2); “fire” (1:16; 15:34; 20:26; 22:20; 31:12); and finally the term “dust” (2:12; 4:19; 5:6; 7:5, 21; 17:16; and 19:25).^{xii}

CONCLUSION AND THE PURPOSE OF THE PROLOGUE

The Prologue of Job (Job 1-2) is presented in Hebrew prose. From chapter 3-41 we move to Hebrew poetry and then return to prose in the Epilogue, chapter 42. The heart of the poem reveals Job’s feelings along with the reaction of his friends and Job’s response to them. It also chronicles for us the final response from Yahweh himself. So what is the purpose of the Prologue, why are we given this Hebrew prose?

The design of the Prologue is to introduce the foundational question of suffering and conflict that are challenged and explored throughout the unfolding drama of the poem and embedded in the dialogues of Job and his friends. It is the Narrator that sets the stage for the plot and presents the reality of the initial conversation in the heavenly court between God and Satan concerning his servant Job. Through the voice of the Narrator, the reader is thrust into a position of being omnipresent and omniscience as he/she is able to see from the very viewpoint of the

Narrator. Therefore, the perspective of the Narrator as presented in the Prologue is essential for our understanding of the entire work. But it does more.

In the work of Edgar Jones, *The Triumph of Job*, he outlines five features of the Prologue which contribute to our understanding of the rest of the book:

1. Chapters 1-2 “put out to court the view that all suffering must be due to sin.” We, the readers, know that Job is not being punished for his sins. That may be the case as revealed in other portions of Scripture but not from the study of Job.
2. It is clearly wrong to imagine, as his friends, that Job is being disciplined so that he may learn the error of his ways. It is God’s view that Job is “blameless and upright” and thus also rules out that Job’s character is being purified through his suffering.
3. Even though the book makes plain that good and upright people do suffer without any apparent reason to account for it, the Prologue as well as the rest of the book point us to the reality that the outcome of such suffering will be a deeper relationship between the sufferer and God.
4. The Prologue invites us to place the problem of innocent suffering in a wider context. We are being prepared here in the Prologue not only to face the questions of suffering, but also to see them in the larger framework of Job’s relationship to God. How is a person to maintain faith in God in the face of suffering?
5. Jones final comment concerning the importance of the Prologue is that “in the transference of the scene from earth to heaven, we have the hint that even unconsciously men can be the vehicle of God’s purposes.”^{xiii}

In conclusion, David Atkinson’s summation of the importance of the Prologue captures the essence of the perspective of the Narrator in Job 1-2, he explains,

The suffering of human beings finds its meaning within God's heavenly purposes for his world. In the suffering of Job, God's servant, God is working out his purposes of grace. In that sense, Job will stand as a witness to the truth which comes to its fullness in the life and death of Jesus Christ. For Christ, much more fully and marvelously than Job, is the Suffering Servant of the Lord. As H. Wheeler Robinson remarks, "The Book of Job is . . . a first draft of the Gospel story, for it shows a man who bore his cross before Christ."^{xivxv}

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ENDNOTES

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- ⁱ F.B. Huey, Jr. and Bruce Conley, *A Student's Dictionary for Biblical & Theological Studies: A Handbook of Special and Technical Terms* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 179.
- ⁱⁱ Richard N. Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism* Second Ed. (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), 210.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Josh McDowell, *More Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Here's Life Publishers, 1981), 45.
- ^{iv} John Hayes, *An Introduction to Old Testament Study* (Nashville: Abington, 1986), 354.
- ^v Rolf Rendtorff, *The Old Testament, An Introduction* (Fortress Press, 1986), 250-51.
- ^{vi} H.H. Rowley, *The New Century Bible Commentary, The Book of Job* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 9.
- ^{vii} *Ibid.*, 8.
- ^{viii} Norman Habel, *The Book of Job* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985), 35.
- ^{ix} Walter C. Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament, A Guide for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 67.
- ^x Habel, *The Book of Job*, 49.
- ^{xi} Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 203.
- ^{xii} Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield, England: Almond, 1987), 29.
- ^{xiii} Edgar Jones, *The Triumph of Job* (SCM Press, 1966), 33-34.
- ^{xiv} David Atkinson, *The Message of Job, Suffering and Grace* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1991), 32-33.
- ^{xv} H. Wheeler Robinson, *The Cross in the Old Testament* (SCM Press, 1955), 54.