

# DAILY BIBLE ILLUSTRATIONS

by

**John Kitto, D.D., F.S.A.**

First Week - Fifth Day

WHEN JOB LIVED

*"There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil. And seven sons and three daughters were born to him. Also, his possessions were seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred female donkeys, and a very large household, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the East. And his sons would go and feast in their houses, each on his appointed day, and would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. So it was, when the days of feasting had run their course, that Job would send and sanctify them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, 'It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.' Thus Job did regularly" (Job 1:1-5).*

In order to understand the Book of Job, it is very necessary to have some idea of the time in which Job lived. On this point very different and contradictory opinions have been entertained; though certainly the notion that has been at all times prevalent is that his existence must be during the patriarchal age, or to the time between the birth of Abraham and the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. In this view we concur. Yet it may still be difficult to ascertain the precise portion of that long period, though we think there are means for a proximate conclusion.

That Job lived before the departure of the Israelites from the house of their bondage in Egypt is deduced from the fact that there is not any direct allusion throughout the whole book either to that remarkable event, or to the series of wonders that accompanied it, or to the journey to the land of Canaan. This silence is unaccountable except on the supposition that Job and his friends lived before it occurred; for the exodus would have furnished the most striking illustration to be found in history of God's interposition for the deliverance of those who trusted in Him and for the punishment of wrong-doers. It would have been exactly the illustration that Job and his friends needed and such as they could not fail to have adduced in support of their views had it been known to them. The Exodus is the great storehouse of argument and illustration for the sacred writers after its occurrence, and its absence in this book of Job, where it would have lain in the direct course of the argument, is most strange and unaccountable on any other hypothesis.

Job, at the time of his affliction, had grown children settled in their own homes. He also speaks of his youth as a time long past. Indeed, no one supposes he was other than a man of mature years bordering on what would be regarded now as old age. Suppose, however, that he was not more than forty years old. Since he lived 140 years afterward, this would make his age at the time of his death to be no less than 180 years. This is an important element for an approximate determination of the age in which he lived. The duration of man's life underwent a gradual decline, the steps of which we are enabled clearly to trace through the years assigned to the post-diluvian patriarchs. Let us set down a few numbers in the line of Eber to make this plain:

Eber, 464	Reu, 239	Nahor, 148	Abraham, 175	Jacob, 147
Peleg, 239	Serug, 230	Terah, 205	Isaac, 180	Joseph, 110

By this it will appear probable that Job belonged to the age in which Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob flourished; and it may be inferred that although he may have been a little earlier than Abraham, he could not well have been later than Jacob.

Many have contended for the earlier date and urge that the discussion between Job and his friends must have taken place before the destruction of Sodom and the other cities of the plain because that great convulsion and overthrow must have been known far and wide throughout this region. It must have excited the most profound attention and was far too pertinent to their arguments not to be cited. But we are not so sure of this. It stands on different ground from the silence respecting the Exodus of the Israelites. In fact, this great destruction of Sodom was a matter in which the chosen race had no direct concern, and it is but rarely alluded to by the sacred writers. Nevertheless, it may be taken among other proofs for the early date of Job's existence, and there can be little difficulty in placing his great testing before that event; for the considerations which tend to make him the contemporary of Isaac and Jacob will for the most part apply as well to a somewhat earlier, though not to a later, date.

Let it also be noted that the manners and customs described in this book entirely correspond to those of the age of the Hebrew patriarchs as described in the Book of Genesis. And the religion of Job was the same as theirs, no allusion occurring to rites and observances of the Jewish system as established in the wilderness under Moses. It is a religion of sacrifices but without any official priest. Job himself, as head of the family, presents the offering on behalf of his children and his friends. Job's riches, like those of the Hebrew patriarchs, are reckoned by cattle; and it is worthy of notice that the cattle are the same kinds as those given in the account of Abraham's wealth, with the same remarkable absence of horses and mules. Also, the daughters of Job received an inheritance among their brethren, which was not the custom of later years. It is, moreover, a circumstance of great importance that the only species of idolatry alluded to in the book is Sabeism, or the worship of the heavenly bodies, which is universally allowed to be the most ancient of all idolatries; and not only is this alone mentioned, but it seems to be noticed as a recent innovation then still liable to judicial punishment.