

Garrett, Duane A. *Job. Evangelical Exegetical Commentary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2024. 582pp. + 18pp. (front matter) + 54pp. (back matter).

Duane Garrett is a professor of OT interpretation and biblical theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has published numerous OT commentaries (on Exodus, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Hosea, Joel, Amos), Hebrew grammars, and *The Problem of the Old Testament: Hermeneutical, Schematic, and Theological Approaches*.

After the introduction, Garrett's commentary on Job covers each pericope in the following categories: textual notes, annotated translation, verse-by-verse commentary, biblical theology, and application. Under textual notes Garrett provides representative translations from the LXX, Vulgate, and Targum. He intends to illustrate the great liberties these versions took with the text and thus to undermine selective use of these texts for the purpose of emending difficult portions of the Hebrew text.

Garrett thinks that a Solomonic era dating is most plausible for Job. He does not think that a literary priority can be established between Job 12:24 and Psalm 107:40. He disputes many of the intertextual connections proposed by Dell, Kynes, and Seow. Garrett does think, however, that Job alludes to Psalm 8. He also argues for the integrity of the book, noting, "Reshuffling the book is a tacit admission that one does not understand Job as is and that some part of it must be jettisoned to save the scholar's interpretation" (18).

Garrett provides two outlines of Job (1–2). The first outline summarizes the basic content of the book:

- I. Prologue: Job's Affliction (1–2)
- II. The Three Cycles of Debate (3–27)
 - A. First Cycle (3–14)
 - B. Second Cycle (15–21)
 - C. Third Cycle (22–27)
- III. The Inaccessibility of Wisdom (28)
- IV. The Three Major Speeches (29–42:6)
 - A. Job's Speech (29–31)
 - B. Elihu's Speech (32–37)
 - C. God's Speech (38:1–42:6)
- V. Epilogue: Job's Vindication (42:7–17)

Garrett's second outline is chiastic:

- A: Job's Affliction (1–2)
- B: Job Curses the Day of His Birth (3)
- C: The Three Cycles of Debate (4–27)
- D: The Inaccessibility of Wisdom (28)
- C': The Three Major Speeches (29:1–42:6)
- B': Job Intercedes for the Three Friends (42:7–9)
- A': Job's Prosperity (42:10–17)

The most notable interpretive decision reflected in the second outline is the centrality of Job 28 and the identification of this chapter as the words of the narrator rather than as part of one of Job's speeches.

Garrett resists constructing a biblical theology of Job, noting that the theology of Job "is not a series of themes to be extracted from various segments of the speeches" but is found in "the outcome of the debate" and thus in the message of the book in its entirety (31). This, however, leads to the question of how to interpret Job. Garrett briefly surveys interpretations from the medieval to the modern period. He finds medieval Jewish commentators distracted by issues and assumptions foreign to Job, and he cautions contemporary interpreters from appealing to their specific interpretations without understanding their larger claims and context. He also rejects critical approaches that, whether due to source criticism or postmodernism, cannot find a single meaning to the book. Evangelicals also come in for critique. Francis Andersen's conclusion that "the causes of suffering are more complex than the doctrine of retribution and that a full answer requires an eschatological dimension, which Job lacks" (Garrett's summary) is rejected as denying any resolution to the book since it was written before the necessary eschatology was revealed (39). Garrett also rejects the approach of John Walton and Tremper Longman since it presents a negative reading of Job even in chapters 1 and 2 and (despite their intent) casts doubt on the justice and wisdom of God.

Garrett argues that Job is an examination of the following questions: "Does God govern justly? If so, why do the wicked often escape punishment while the righteous suffer miserably?" (41). The question of whether Job will curse God is not the issue of the book; Garrett says that is settled at the end of chapter 2. Foundational to his understanding of Job is the statement that Job was blameless and the reality that he suffered because of his righteousness and not because of any sin. This raises the question: Is God just for allowing righteous Job to suffer? Both Job and his friends fail to provide a satisfactory answer to this question because they hold to a retribution theology. The friends conclude from this that Job must have sinned; Job maintains his innocence and raises the possibility that God was unjust toward him. Garrett concludes that the three friends argue themselves into a dead end. Job makes some "increasingly insightful and profound observations on the human condition and on how divine deliverance might work" (42), but he does not find a solution to his problem.

Garrett believes that chapter 28 was introduced by the author to teach that wisdom is beyond human apprehension. Garrett maintains that Job 28 does not fit with what Job says elsewhere. If Job spoke this chapter, he would not need to be corrected by God later in the book. Rather, the author positions this poetic commentary right after Job has wrestled with the paradox that God is good for punishing the wicked and yet has treated innocent Job as the worst of the wicked. Job 28 is an answer to Job that proclaims "the limitations of human wisdom" (356).

Garrett has a negative view of Elihu. Elihu represents the readers who know they should reject the viewpoint of the three friends but who are inclined to neglect the statement of the prologue regarding Job's righteousness and find some wrong in him. "Elihu is a warning to us that we are not as wise as we think" (45).

Then God speaks. He dismisses Job's case against him, condemns the three friends' arguments against Job, and establishes to Job that he knows more about running the world than Job does. God's

speech concludes with Behemoth and Leviathan. Behemoth represents human government, which is to maintain justice and order but which does so imperfectly. Garrett claims, “Behemoth is the *symbolic embodiment of retribution*” (541). Leviathan “represents the cosmological and supernatural evil in which the world is engulfed,” that is, he represents Satan (46; cf. 74). Only God can deal with these beasts; they are beyond human control. In the end Job confesses not that he had sinned but that he had been wrong to charge God with wronging him. The book does not reveal “how evil will be overcome,” but it does reveal that “God manages the world in such a way that its chaotic forces are kept in balance and humanity, along with all other living things endures” (46). But as to how evil is defeated, the original reader was to fear God and trust God. The Christian reader knows that this problem is addressed in Christ, crucified, risen, and coming to subdue all enemies.

A commentary with detailed notes on the Hebrew text from an evangelical perspective is a welcome addition to the commentary literature on Job. Inevitably, there will be differences of opinion on key exegetical decisions. For instance, Garrett’s understanding of Elihu is not entirely persuasive. How is the reader to know that Elihu is a stand-in for himself? Further, the reader has been provided with more information than Elihu, which makes it unlikely that Elihu can stand in for the reader. Garrett finds confirmation of his reading by proposing that the “this” of Job 38:2 refers to Elihu, not Job (“Who is this who makes sound thinking obscure with arguments that lack knowledge,” Garrett’s translation, 496). Verse 1, however, specifies that Yhwh was answering Job when he said these words.

Similarly, given the headings in Job 27:1 and Job 29:1, it seems more likely that Job 28 is a speech from Job. It is important to observe, however, that Garrett does not reject all insight on Job’s part. For instance, when Job asserts in 16:19 that he has an “advocate on high,” Garrett argues that Job’s “advocate is fully sentient and speaks with God as one colleague to another (v. 21)” (236). He understands that the advocate is God himself. This raises a question: “How is God to serve as a mediator between himself and a man?” Garrett says that the Book of Job does not address this question; however, Christian theology would identify this witness with the Son. Garrett also hastens to add that even when Job has these flashes of insight, he is not correct in all of his conceptions. For instance, the Son will not rebuke the Father for unjustly punishing Job (236).

Chapter 19 contains another theological high point for Job. Garrett finds the assertion, “But I know that my redeemer lives!” to be an affirmation that Job’s redeemer is a living person (and not a personification). He understands verses 26–27 to speak of Job’s burial and resurrection, and he argues for the translation “from my flesh I will behold God,” against Seow and others who propose the translation “without my flesh.” He also argues against Crenshaw, Clines, Walton, and Longman, who identify the redeemer as someone other than God. He agrees with Hartley’s argument that the redeemer is God.

Garrett has produced a valuable commentary on a difficult book. Most of the detailed commentaries on Job have come from the critical scholars, so Garrett’s detailed work from an evangelical perspective is welcome.

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