

JOB'S EXPERIENCES TYPICAL OF HUMAN HISTORY

"All these things happened unto them for ensamples [margin, types], and they are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the ages are come." – 1 Corinthians 10:11.

THE Book of Job is credited with being the finest piece of literature in the Hebrew language. It is a poem: and all scholars admit that no translation yet given does it justice. Martin Luther, after reviewing his last effort to translate it into the German, said, "Job is suffering more from my version than from the taunts of his friends, and would prefer his dunghill to my translation of his lamentation." The Book of Job "is admitted, with hardly a dissenting voice, to be the most sublime religious poem in the literature of the world," said Samuel Cox. "I call that one of the grandest things ever written with pen....There is nothing written, in the Bible nor out of it, of equal literary merit," said Thomas Carlyle.

Whoever was used of God as the penman, his name is not given. The book is introduced with a prose narrative of Job's losses and sufferings. (The account of Satan's conversation with God concerning Job should be considered as allegorical – after the style of *Pilgrim's Progress*.) Then his patient endurance is set forth. Next follow the poetic colloquies between Job and his three friends, then Elihu's argument, then the Almighty's address, then Job's confession. The conclusion, relating to Job's return to favor and blessing, and his death, is in prose.

Some have assumed that the Book of Job is merely a parable; and that Job himself is merely an imaginary character. But if this were the case, the *teachings* of the book would not be different. However, we see no cause to doubt that such a person did live and

pass through the experiences related. In Ezekiel 14:14 and James 5:11, Job is classed with other holy men, which would not be the case were this narrative merely a parable. Besides, there are particular details given, such as are not common to parables.

The fact that Job lived a hundred and forty years after his adversities, or probably over two hundred years in all, together with the fact that neither he nor his friends make any allusion to Israel or Moses or the Law, nor to Abraham and God's Covenant made with him, seems to indicate beyond doubt that he belonged to the Patriarchal Age. Possibly he lived about the same time as Abraham. His home was evidently in Arabia, and probably not far from Palestine.

Job is introduced as a man of great learning and influence; as a man of great piety, who knew and revered God and appreciated justice; as a man of great generosity, who considered the widow and the orphan; and as a merchant prince of great wealth, who by his numerous servants and three thousand camels, carried on an extended and very prosperous traffic.

Suddenly disaster came upon him and he was bereft of his children, his wealth, his influence and his health. He sought in vain for an explanation as to why God should permit such evils to befall him. Yet still he trusted in God, saying, "Though he *slay* me, yet will I trust in Him!" His wife urged that it had been without Divine appreciation that he had sought to do justice and mercy all his life, and exclaimed, "Curse God and die!"

His three friends came to visit him, and, taking much the same view, told him in lengthy argument that he must have been a great sinner and a hypocrite. But, conscious of his own heart-honesty toward God, Job defends himself and goes to too great an extreme in declaring his innocence, but silences his critics. He seems to realize his need of some one to represent his cause before the Lord. He cries out that he is as righteous as he knows how to be; that he

cannot reason the matter with God, being so much beneath Him in knowledge and power. He [R5402 : page 51] declares that the wilfully wicked are not so troubled, while he who has pursued righteousness is so afflicted that life has no further pleasure and he wishes that he had never been born. (Chapters 9, 10, and 16.) Feeling his own insufficiency to state his case before the great Jehovah, he desires a "daysman [a mediator] betwixt" God and himself. – Chapters 9:33; 16:21.

Job's masterly reply to the false reasonings of his friends (which many improperly quote as inspired), and his expressions of confidence in God and of his ultimate deliverance, are clearly presented in Chapter 13:1-16. And then, with prophetic wisdom, in Chapter 14, he presents a most wonderful statement of the course of God's dealing with mankind.

THE PROBLEM OF THE AGES

The question which perplexed Job and confused his reasonings was the same that for centuries has confused others of God's people; namely, Why does God permit evil (calamities, afflictions, etc.) to come upon His faithful servants? and why are the wicked permitted to flourish? But not until the Gospel Dispensation was it possible for any to know the mind of God on this subject; [R5402 : page 52] for it is one of the *deep things* which could be revealed only by the Spirit of God, and only to those begotten of that Spirit, as St. Paul explains. (1 Corinthians 2:9-14.) And the Holy Spirit was not *thus* given, as a guide and teacher, until after Christ had redeemed us and ascended up on High, there to present His sacrifice as the price of our return to Divine favor, peace and communion.

Although many are still in the dark on this subject, it is now open and clear to all the earnest ones to whom "it is granted to know the *mysteries* of the Kingdom of Heaven," to understand "the deep things of God." (Matthew 12:11; 1 Corinthians 2:10.) These

see that the reign of evil, the reign of Sin and Death, under Satan, the Prince of this world, is permitted for two reasons: first, that all men may gain a full experience of the exceeding sinfulness of sin and the bitterness of its legitimate fruit; and, second, that God's people may be fully tried and tested as to their loyalty to God in the shadow of affliction and trial, as well as in the sunshine of health and prosperity.

Thus while God did not directly cause the evil state of things which surrounds us in nature and among men, but let it come upon men as the legitimate result, or fruit, of disobedience, sin, yet He does make use of the wrath of man and the sins of men and the animosity of Satan to work out grand designs which they do not comprehend, and of which His children know only by faith in His Word of revelation. For instance, how little did Satan and those malicious Jewish priests and Pharisees and those heartless Roman soldiers know that they were assisting in the working out of the Divine Plan when insulting, mocking and crucifying the Lamb of God!

And so it is with the many afflictions of God's people – especially those of the Little Flock, the Bride of Christ. Trials are designed to fit and polish them for the greater usefulness and honor in the future developments of God's great Plan. Thus, regardless of the wilfulness or the ignorance of the persecutors, these trials of faith and patience are working out for such a "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." This they do by *preparing* the called ones to be heirs of glory, by cultivating patience, experience, brotherly sympathy and love – which is God-likeness. Such, and such only can rejoice in tribulation and realize that all things – bad as well as good; unfavorable, as well as favorable – will be overruled in God's providence for their ultimate benefit.

JOB'S HOPE OF A RESURRECTION

But, returning to our consideration of Job, let us note in Chapter 14 some of his prophetic wisdom. The first four verses graphically picture what all of experience realize – that human life under present conditions is full of trial and sorrow, from the cradle to the tomb. And Job shows that he realizes that as a son of fallen parentage he could not be *perfect*, free from sin, *clean*, in the full sense of the word.

In verses 5,6, he tells the Lord that he recognizes the fact that the authority and power to limit man's days are in His hands, but urges (not seeing the ministry of trouble), Why not let me and all men live out our short time in *peace* – even as we would not afflict a hireling who already has a heavy, burdensome task!

Verses 7-10 are close reasonings respecting the utter hopelessness of man in death, so far as any powers of his own are concerned. A tree may die and yet its root retain life, which, under favorable conditions, may spring up into another tree. But when man dies there is no root left, no spark of life remains. He giveth up the spirit of life, and where is he?

Having confessed that there is no ground for hope inherent in man, Job begins to express the only, the real hope of our race – a resurrection – see verses 12,13. Man lies down in death and loses all power to arouse himself – nor can he be resuscitated from the sleep of death by any one, until God's due time. This will be the Resurrection morning, the Millennial Day, when the present symbolic *heavens* shall have passed away, and the *new heavens* or new spiritual ruling power – Christ's Kingdom – shall have come into control of the world. In this Job fully agrees with the teachings of our Lord and the Apostles.

The more he thinks of that blessed time when evil shall no more have dominion, but when a King shall reign in righteousness

and princes shall execute judgment, the more he wishes he might die and be at rest. He exclaims (verse 13), "Oh, that Thou wouldst hide me in the grave [*sheol*]; that Thou wouldst *keep me secret [hidden]* until Thy wrath be past; that Thou wouldst appoint me a set time and remember me!" Job had faith in a resurrection, else he would never have uttered this prayer for *death* – for hiding in the grave. But he preferred death, and desired to *sleep* (verse 12) until the *morning*, for one reason only – that he might have no further experience with sin and with God's wrath – evil.

A short period in the end of the Gospel Age is specially called "the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God," because it will be "A time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation." Yet the entire period from the time Adam fell is called a time of Divine wrath, and properly so; for in all this long period "the wrath of God is revealed against all unrighteousness," in a variety of ways. While Love is a controlling principle in the Divine Government, it can operate only in harmony with Justice and Wisdom. It was both just and wise to let man feel the real weight of condemnation to death incurred by wilful transgression, in order that when Love should in due time provide a Ransom and a Resurrection, the culprit might the more gladly avail himself of the provided favors of Restitution and everlasting life. Thus *death* and all the evils permitted to come upon the culprit race are manifestations of God's wrath, which will be yet further shown in the great Time of Trouble. This will be followed by full and clear manifestations of God's Love and favor in Christ and the glorified Church during the Millennial Age. – Romans 1:18.

In verses 14 and 15, he puts the question pointedly, as though to determine and settle his faith; but he immediately answers affirmatively: "Thou shalt call, and I will answer Thee [and awake out of the sleep of Adamic death – compare John 5:28,29]; Thou wilt have a desire to the work of Thine hands" – for His people are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus. – Ephesians 2:10.

ELIHU'S HOPE OF A REDEEMER

When Job had refuted the arguments of his three friends, Elihu (whose name signifies *God Himself*) spoke from a different standpoint, reproving the three friends as well as Job. Elihu shows Job that he had been reasoning in part from a wrong premise – that he must not expect to fully comprehend all the ways of One so far above him, but must trust in God's Justice and in His Wisdom. And in Chapter 33:23,24 he shows the one thing necessary to man's recovery from the power of death, and his restoration to Divine favor, saying, "If there be with Him a Messenger as defender, One of a thousand [i.e., a rare One] to declare His own righteousness *for man*, then will God be gracious unto him [man] [R5402 : page 53] and say, Release him from going down to the grave; I have found a Ransom."

This is indeed the case with man. God's Wisdom and Justice cannot be impugned. The sentence of death is justly upon all men through Father Adam. (Romans 5:12.) But God has provided us a Redeemer, Christ Jesus our Lord; and He, in harmony with the Father's Plan, became a man, and then gave Himself a Ransom-price *for all* by paying the death-penalty that was upon Adam. And as soon as the Bride, otherwise called His Body and the Temple, is complete, this great Mediator will stand forward to declare His righteousness as for, or applicable to, every one who will accept it.

Then will follow Restitution, as pictured in verses 25 and 26. Physically, these for whom the Mediator stands shall be restored to a perennial youth, in which death and decay will find no place. They shall find acceptance and communion with God in joy and peace; and He will restore them to the original perfection, lost through sin in Eden. But an acknowledgment that God is just, and that the Restitution was unmerited will be required. This is indicated by verses 27,28: "He will chant it before men, and say: I have sinned and perverted the right; and it was not requited me. He

has redeemed my soul from going into the pit and my life that it may be brought to the light."

Elihu's words were as wise as any of those spoken by Job's comforters – probably wiser; but they were merely human wisdom, so far as we can discern. In Chapter 34:29 he asks the question, "When He [Jehovah] giveth [R5403 : page 53] quietness, who then can make trouble?" Evidently the young man sought to draw a line in the criticism of Job, agreeing with neither Job nor his friends, but endeavoring to be moderate in his position. He defended the Almighty, claiming that if God had not so ordered, Job's adversities could not have come upon him.

To Elihu it seemed clear that God had a hand in Job's experiences. Satan could not have sent all these calamities unless God had permitted it. Neither man nor angel of whatever rank could thwart the Divine will. God, not Job, had the authority to decide what should be done. God alone had the right to order all of life's affairs. Incidentally Elihu showed that Job was more righteous than were his friends; and that while he was imperfect, like all, yet he was not being punished on this account.

A DIFFICULT LESSON FOR MANY

The Christian may very well draw a lesson from Elihu's question. Although the words are not inspired, yet they are very wise. We can recognize the truth they contain – that when God purposes to give peace, quietness, the whole Universe will be in obedience to His Laws, and *none* can make trouble.

If we have difficulties, if we have persecutions, if we have troubles of any kind we should look to God. We should say: This thing could not happen to me unless the Lord permitted it. We have come under special Divine care. God has promised that all things shall work together for good to us who are His children. The lesson of trust is one of those difficult lessons for us to learn and apply –

to realize that all of life's experiences are under Divine supervision and that nothing can happen to us but what is for our highest good. This is not now true of the world, but merely of God's family. By and by God will make all things work out blessings for the world.

It is in respect to these who are His children that all things now work for good. When we are in difficulty, we are to look up in confidence and trust to the Lord. Our Heavenly Father wishes us to exercise faith in Him. St. Peter tells us that we are "kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation." Therefore we greatly rejoice, even "though now for a season we are in heaviness through manifold trials" and temptations. "The trial of your faith is much more precious than that of gold that perisheth." – 1 Peter 1:5-7.

FALSE PEACE OF MANY

There is another way by which some may have quietness. Many in the world enjoy a measure of peace, or rest from worry. Yet they are unaware of the great truths which we enjoy, and are in blindness, ignorance, superstition, error, through Satan's delusions. They have a feeling of security and ease, through the blinding influence of error and falsehood. Those of the world who come into relationship with God, are therefore sometimes awakened from false security. Then they gain the true peace and rest of heart. The Lord says: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." No true rest can be gained otherwise.

The Lord's people have a peace and rest of mind through the knowledge of the Lord's Plan, the knowledge of His Justice, Mercy and Love, and a blessed realization that He is *our* God. All these things give us peace and quiet and rest of mind. While the world are troubled more or less, God's children have a peace that the world knows not of, that the world can neither give nor take away. And when the trials are all over, the Lord will make up for all the

troubles of the present time, for all His children have suffered. We shall then look back on these trials and consider them but light afflictions, only for a moment. – 2 Corinthians 4:17.

TESTS OF LOYALTY AND DEVOTION

When the Lord permits great clouds of trouble to come upon us, we should first look to see if we can discern any wrong-doing in ourselves which might properly bring chastisement. We *should* have joy in the Lord. But perhaps we have not been living close enough to the Lord. Yet these clouds of affliction do not necessarily mean that we have not been living close to Him, as we have seen in the case of Job.

We remember likewise in the experiences of our Lord Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before His crucifixion, how He said to His disciples, Peter, James and John, "My soul is *exceeding sorrowful*, even unto *death*." We remember that God did not give Him quietness, but allowed trouble like a great flood to sweep over His soul. He was troubled to know surely whether He had been entirely loyal, faithful and obedient, as was necessary to maintain the Father's favor. We are told by the Apostle Paul that our Lord Jesus "offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him out of death – and was heard." – Hebrews 5:7.

We find that the Father sent His angel to minister unto His dear Son, in His deep distress. As soon as the angel had given our Lord the assurance of the Father that He was well pleasing in His life and conduct, He became perfectly calm. And the assurance sustained Him in all the trying experiences which followed – the trial before the Sanhedrin, before Pilate, the treatment of the soldiers, the journey on the way to Calvary, and in the midst of the trying process of execution which followed.

Only at the last, when the Father, because Jesus must take the sinner's place, withdrew His presence from Him in His dying moment did our Lord manifest disturbance of mind. Then He cried out in agony of soul, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" It was necessary for our Lord to experience the entire cutting off from God [R5403 : page 54] and from all relationship to God, in order to pay the full penalty for Adam's sin. This experience was at the very last moment. The Heavenly Father permitted this, for it was necessary to our Lord that He should realize the meaning of the sinner's separation from God.

We do not consider it necessary that in every case our Lord's true and faithful followers should have a similar experience. We are not, as was our Redeemer, the Ransom, the Sin-bearer for the world; but it would not be surprising if some may have similar experiences to those of our Lord. Some of the saints have died, exclaiming: "I am sweeping through the gates of the New Jerusalem!" while others have had dying experiences more like those of our Lord, and have cried out, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

We can be content to leave our experiences entirely in the hands of Him who loves us, and can have an inward peace and calm and a rest of soul, knowing that no outward storm will be permitted but such as the Father sees will bring forth in us the peaceable fruits of righteousness, if we are properly exercised thereby.

RESTITUTION FOR MANKIND PICTURED

In the concluding chapters of the Book of Job, Jehovah addresses His afflicted servant, reproving his temerity in attempting, with his little knowledge, to *judge God*. This Job acknowledges, and finds peace in trusting God. Job's three friends, however, are severely reprovved by God. But when they obey God and go to Job and offer up for themselves a burnt offering

according to the Lord's commandment, and Job prays for them as God further instructed, they are restored to Divine favor. At once Job's prosperity returns – his friends and influence are restored; his wealth was exactly doubled, for he had twice as many flocks and herds and camels. He had also the same number of sons and daughters as before, and the Scriptures note that there were "no women found so fair as the daughters of Job."

This ending of Job's career with a general *Restitution* is incomprehensible to those who have never seen that the Plan of God in Christ provides for a "Time of Restitution" of all things lost in Adam, to all of his race who will accept them under the terms of the New Covenant. (Acts 3:19-21.) But those who do see this Plan of God can readily see, too, that Job's experience was not only actual, but also *typical*. He seems to represent mankind. Man was at first in the Divine likeness and favor, with all things subject to him. (Psalm 8:4-8.) Because of Adam's sin Satan obtained an influence in human affairs which has resulted in degradation, sickness and death. God, however, has never really forsaken His creatures, and is even now waiting to be gracious unto all in and through Christ Jesus our Lord.

