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heart, mind and will, the same apostle's appeal, first to the believers in Colossae: "Set your mind on the things that are *above*, not on the things that are upon the earth. For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also be manifested with Him in glory" (Col. 3:2-4 R.V.). Writing to the Ephesian church the Apostle reminds the believers that as such they (and we also) have been raised up "with Christ" and are seated with Him in "*the heaventies*"; "that in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus: for by grace have ye been saved through faith" (Eph. 2:7 and 8).

The question arises in the heart of any true believer: How much do we manifest in true humbleness of heart, but with real courage in the face of opposition of whatever kind it may be, the reality and joy of THE DIVINE INTIMACY—with The Triune God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit, forever Blessed?

## THE BOOK OF JOB

A. NAISMITH, M.A.

Since an orderly presentation of the outline of any text-book invariably proves helpful to those desirous of making a more detailed study of it, these paragraphs are an attempt to set forth concisely an outline of this rarely studied book. The great German Reformer and Theologian, Martin Luther, said of this book: "It is magnificent and sublime as no other book in Scripture". Thomas Carlyle, the Scottish Historian, Essayist and Philosopher, wrote concerning the book of Job: "I call this book, apart from all theories about it, one of the grandest things ever written with pen. One feels, indeed, as if it were not Hebrew: such a noble universality different from noble patriotism or sectarianism, reigns in it. There is nothing written, I think, in the Bible or out of it, of equal literary merit.—A noble book, all men's book". And Alfred Lord Tennyson, one of the most brilliant of English Poet-laureates, called it "the greatest poem of ancient and modern times". Since the book has such an appeal to all men, its doctrines cannot but be

profitable to all Christians, who will find in it a message of Divine comfort in a world of perplexity and affliction. Job is a book of history, philosophy, poetry and Theology. In it are asked such questions as "Hast thou heard the secret of God?" and "Canst thou by searching find out God?" And the longing is expressed, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him". It is difficult to fix the date of the writing of the Book of Job, but it seems certain that the man Job lived in patriarchal times.

Job is a non-Jewish book. The incidents recounted in the historical section of the book probably took place before the Jews were established as a nation. The book has been described as an account of "the agony of the human heart when racked by the heartache and the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to." But it is more: it is the story of God's dealings with His servant, His child. It is the child-training of Job and the "Nevertheless afterwards" of Heb. 12:11. It is the narrative of "the patience of Job and the end of Jehovah".

### 1. Its position in the Scriptures

The Hebrew Scriptures were classified and grouped together to form several distinct sections. The section known as *Kethubim* comprised six poetical writings, namely, the books of Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Solomon's Song, Lamentations and Ecclesiastes. Our arrangement of the books of the Bible differs in many respects from that of the Hebrews, yet we group five of the six books of the *Kethubim* together into what is usually known as the *Wisdom Writings*. Positionally, chronologically and psychologically, Job stands first in the five books of Wisdom which have their place in the very centre of the Old Testament. Before them come 17 historical books, of which 14 are pre-exilic and 3 post-exilic; and 17 prophetic books, 14 pre-exilic and 3 post-exilic, come after the Wisdom writings. The order of the five themes dealt with in the five Wisdom books is significant and instructive. The subjects presented are—the problem of human suffering in *Job*, the enjoyment of Divine communion in *Psalms*, a code of ethical conduct in *Proverbs*, the quest for supreme satisfaction in *Ecclesiastes*, and the loyalty of true love in the *Song of Songs*.

It is noteworthy, too, that the book of Job contains the middle chapter in the Old Testament, Chapter 29.

### 2. Its place in History

Modern criticism has attempted to prove that the story of Job is merely an allegory lacking in historical foundation: but for all who accept the plenary inspiration of the Bible there cannot be the slightest doubt as to its historicity. The prophet Ezekiel mentions Job along with Noah and Daniel (Ch. 14:14, 20): therefore Job is no more a fictitious character than they are. James is the only New Testament writer who mentions Job. In his letter that emphasizes the desirable qualities of wisdom and patience, he comforts the afflicted poor of God's flock with the words, "Ye have heard of the patience of Job and have seen the end of the Lord" (James 5:10-11). While no certain date can be assigned to the book of Job, there seem to be very good reasons for believing Job to have been a contemporary of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Rabbinical tradition, the absence of reference to Israel's nationality, decalogue or sacerdotal institutions, and the ancient Hebrew style in which the poem is written, with the frequent Arabicisms, all mark it out as belonging to patriarchal times.

### 3. Its province in Literature

This book is the only dramatic poem in the Bible. Its main section, in which the dialogistic discourses are poetically recorded, —from Chapter 3 to Chapter 14 is preceded by a narrative prologue in prose, and followed by a prose epilogue.

### 4. Its Plan in Outline

The following analysis is suggested as being both simple and obvious:

#### (i) *Chapters 1 and 2: Historical—Job's Calamities*

Here the Holy Spirit records Satan's two assaults on Job and the arrival and conduct of his friends. By God's permission, and at the instigation of Satan, four terrible calamities overtake Job. The Sabaeans rob him of his oxen and asses and slay his

servants. Lightning from heaven (the fire of God) consumes his sheep and shepherds. Next, the Chaldeans, swooping down in three bands, drive off his camels and kill his camel herds. Finally, a mighty tornado from the desert devastates the house in which all his family is gathered and destroys them all.

The assault on Job's person lays him low with a painful and loathesome disease. Job's three friends, all elderly men of whom prudence might have been expected, visit the afflicted man and, finding him in this painful state, weep, rend their clothes, and cover their heads with ashes in token of their deep sorrow.

Dr W. Graham Scroggie points out four mistakes made in this section, viz., Satan's mistake in thinking that Job served God for what he could get:

the mistake of Job's wife in thinking that, with the loss of the visible and human, all was lost;

the mistake of Job's friends in thinking that Job's suffering was the direct outcome of sin:

Job's mistake in thinking that God was unkind.

To God Job was "*my servant Job*" before and after the fiery furnace of trial through which he passed. "Blessed in the man that endureth trial", says James in his Epistle. Job's character is appraised three times in this section of the book (1:1; 1:8; and 2:3), and each time the same words are used. When he is described as "Perfect", it does not mean that he was sinlessly perfect, but all-round, well-balanced and mature in wisdom and patience. Evidence of this is his fear that his sons might succumb to the temptations too common in a life of ease, prosperity and pleasure. In status and wealth Job was "the greatest of all the men of the East". His balanced character is seen in three relationships. To his fellow-men he was upright and just in all his dealings with them. He "feared God" and was pious and faithful in his devotions. In his private life he "eschewed evil" and followed only what was good.

#### (ii) Chapters 3 to 26: *Philosophical—Job's Comforters*

A silence lasting a whole week is broken by Job who curses the day of his birth: then follow discourses by the three friends,

each in turn answered by Job. Attempting to explain the mystery of suffering, they argue that, since all suffering is punishment and evidence of God's righteous anger, Job must have been a very wicked man to receive such chastisement at the hand of God. In all they say there is nothing to afford Job a crumb of comfort or hold out a ray of hope; and, disappointed and despairing, Job calls them "miserable comforters" and "physicians of no value". Three cycles of discourses may be distinguished, each with its own characteristics but all dealing with the mystery of suffering.

In the first series (Chs. 3 to 14) Eliphaz is dogmatic, Bildad discourteous, and Zophar didactic. In the second series (Chs. 15 to 21) Eliphaz is critical, Bildad cruel, and Zophar caustic. The third cycle is characterised by the sophistry of Eliphaz, the sagacity of Bildad, and the silence of Zophar. Job's friends erred in condemning instead of comforting. Job erred in justifying himself rather than God. Glimmers of truth, feebly apprehended yet gradually becoming clearer, can be discerned in the utterances of Job in each series of discourses.

In the first cycle he has realised the need of a Daysman, a Mediator, to take up his cause with God (9:33). In the second cycle he expresses his conviction that, in spite of failure on the part of his own kith and kin, his Kinsman-Redeemer is alive and he shall yet see Him (19:25-27). In the course of the third cycle Job begins to discern a Divine purpose in his afflictions and exclaims, "When he hath tried me I shall come forth as gold" (23:10).

### (iii) *Chapters 27 to 37: Evangelical—Job's Condition*

The first five chapters in this section record Job's attempt to vindicate himself as with increased boldness he depicts the course and destiny of the wicked, contrasts earthly treasure with heavenly wisdom, recalls his past prosperity, describes his present wretched and forlorn condition, and avows his integrity and purity of motive.

Throughout the whole scene Elihu, a much younger man, has been a silent listener to the arguments advanced by the various disputants, and now, in God's stead and under the guidance of

God's Spirit, he claims the right to speak since his elders had failed to answer Job satisfactorily. "Elihu" means "He is my God", and his discourse proved that he was a man who had a personal and intimate acquaintance with the God Whom Job was yearning to find. Elihu was not, as some have represented, a conceited and impudent young philosopher, but a man with a message from God, and the forerunner of every true evangelist who should, like him, be "in God's stead", ambassadors of Heaven, guided and prompted by God's Holy Spirit, and should proclaim a message very different from that of mere human philosophers. Calm and gentle, but zealous for God's honour, he refutes Job's accusations against God, reminds him of the greatness and majesty of the Almighty, and discourses on the Divine revelation through the medium of afflictions, not in wrath and displeasure, but in love and kindness. As a wise man, he sought to win Job: as a watchman, he assayed to warn him of the wrath to come. His words, recorded in six chapters, have a twofold object, to instill in Job a living faith in the goodness of God and to convince him of the danger of incurring the wrath of God by an attitude of defiance.

Chapter 33 contains the complete message of the evangelist. *God's Dealings*, sometimes phenomenal, when He speaks in dreams and visions of the night, sometimes providential, when He preserves from danger and death, and sometimes painful, when He permits affliction and sickness, are seen always to have a purpose—"that He may withdraw man from his purpose and hide pride from man". Job learns that God has sometimes to wreck our cherished plans and ambitions in order to work out His benign and gracious purposes in our lives.

*God's feelings* are feelings of grace and compassion. "He is gracious unto him". His kindness is displayed in the provision of a messenger, a mediator, one among a thousand, in the payment of a ransom, "the Man, Christ Jesus, Who gave Himself a ransom for all", and in the proclamation of deliverance.

*God's Healings* of those who repent and seek the Lord include the benefits of redemption, regeneration, reconciliation and relationship. But the condition for receiving such blessings from

God is repentance. "If any say, I have sinned and perverted that which is right and it profited me not; He will deliver his soul". Thus in Elihu's discourse is foreshadowed the apostolic Gospel of "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ". The poet, William Cowper, has expressed it thus:

"If the wandrer his mistake discern,  
 Judge his own ways, and sigh for a return,  
 Bewilder'd once, must he bewail his loss  
 For ever and for ever? No—the Cross,  
 There and there only (though the deist rave,  
 And atheist, if earth bear so base a slave),  
 There, and there only, is the power to save.  
 There no delusive hope invites despair,  
 No mock'ry meets you, no deception there;  
 The spells and charms that blinded you before,  
 All vanish there, and fascinate no more".

In Chapter 34 Elihu refutes Job's accusations of God and wishes that Job's troubles might be prolonged until he learns the lessons God has to teach him. In Chapter 35 Elihu reminds Job of God's greatness, His Providence, His Omnipotence, His Omniscience and His Beneficence, and explains why God has kept silent. Job's pride had amounted to self-sufficiency and self-confidence that destroyed his confidence in God, so Elihu has to sound the note of warning in Chapter 36, and at the close of his speech to emphasize the greatness and wisdom of God. His closing words at the end of Chapter 37 might be compared with the words of Paul in Rom. 11:33:

"O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!"

*(iv) Chapters 38 to 42—Experimental—Job's conversion*

"Now the voice of the creature is hushed and the voice of the Creator is heard". Twice Jehovah addresses Job and twice Job answers. In His first address (38:1 to 40:2) God rebukes Job



for darkening counsel with senseless words. In reply to the Creator's forty questions on natural science and natural history, Job can only confess shamefacedly, "Behold I am vile: what shall I answer Thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth". Job's proud, self-righteous heart is completely humbled by the Lord's second address (40:6 to 41:34) and, prostrating himself before his Maker, he abhors himself and repents in dust and ashes. (42:1-6).

The enigma is solved and God's purpose fulfilled as Job takes the place of repentance and blessing. After Job emerges from the fire as refined gold God still speaks of him as "My servant Job". The rebuke of Job's unfeeling companions and the restoration of Job to prosperity and felicity complete the history of the man Job and reveal "the end of the Lord".

#### 5. Its purpose in our lives

This is the important practical issue of the book, in which three views of punishment and pain are expressed. Job's friends, baffled by the afflictions of Job, could only think of his sufferings as punitive. Are not we too in danger at times of misinterpreting in this unkind way God's dealings with other Christians. The callous Hindu philosophy known as "karma" views every ounce of suffering as the retributive value of a corresponding amount of sin. The book of Job teaches us that we must not think of suffering in terms of punishment, for chastening is not always punitive.

Job, in his agony and bitterness of spirit, found consolation in the assurance that his afflictions were passing. David, Peter and Paul all stressed the impermanence of affliction—"for a night", "for a season", "for a moment"; but they found comfort in the hope of eternal glory.

But that is not the whole truth, nor does it solve the problem of pain. Elihu, God's messenger, affirmed that suffering is always purposive, and Job, and many other of the Lord's most devoted saints have proved this when the end of the Lord was revealed. Samuel Rutherford used to say, "When I find myself in the cellar of affliction, I always look about for the wine".

We are again indebted to the poet, Cowper, for summing up the lessons of suffering in his poem:

“God moves in a mysterious way  
His wonders to perform.

He plants His footsteps on the sea  
And rides upon the storm.

“Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
But trust Him for His grace:

Behind a frowning Providence  
He hides a smiling face.”

## STANDING BEFORE THE LORD

W. WILCOX

(Deut. 5:31—33)

Revolting against the phenomenal accompaniments of the giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai, the Israelites had besought Moses that he might act as mediator between them and God and so, hearing the words being spoken by God, be able to communicate them to the people when the thunderings, thick cloud, and the great voice would be stilled.

In His mercy God signified His acquiescence in this arrangement and told the people to return to their tents, but Moses was commanded to be ready to stand before God and hear His commands.

### 1. *Presentation of Self before the Lord*

There is almost the isolation of the man of God from his brethren, who is stood apart as the man of God's choice, of His appointment and of His approval.

In our dealings with God, do we become alarmed at the thought of directness of approach to His Person, fearing lest He should break forth upon us because of our sin, our lack of diligence, our tendency to forsake His Truth? Or do we come with indifference to His Holiness, to His Majesty, to His Glory? Do we seek for some intermediary, lest we be overtaken by His judgement?