

Chapter Thirteen

The Cry of the Spirit: Job

The book of Job is perhaps the oldest book in the Bible. No one knows who wrote it. Some scholars think it may have been written by Moses while others date it as late as the time of Solomon. But one thing is certain: this book is given to us by the Holy Spirit. It is a beautiful and profound book, touching upon the themes of suffering more deeply than any other book in the Bible. It is also written in beautiful, majestic, even glorious language.

Job was a real man, not a mythological figure. He is mentioned by Ezekiel and is classified as one of the three great men of the Old Testament, along with Noah and Daniel. He is mentioned also in the New Testament by James, who refers to Job's patience and steadfast endurance. In the opening part of the book, Job is found living in the land of Uz, which is probably located in southeastern Edom. He is clearly one of the most prominent citizens of that land and may well have been a contemporary of Abraham. Thus the book takes us back to the very beginnings of biblical history.

Most of the book is poetry, but it begins and ends with prose sections which are like program notes given to an audience. Many scholars think this story was presented at times as a drama in which actors recited the parts of the different characters in the book.

Act I, God Meets with Angelic Creations

The book opens in heaven where God is meeting with the angelic creation. Among them is Satan who strides in sneering and swaggering, operating on the philosophy that self-interest is the only valid motive for all human behavior. In response God says: "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil" (Job 1:8, NASB).

Some have felt that the book of Job is given us, for one reason, to help us understand the relationship between Satan and God. It is clear from this scene that Satan is not on an equal basis with God. Some scholars feel that the book of Job is the record of a great battleground between God and Satan, with Job caught in between. But what kind of battle is this in which one side must get permission from the other before it attacks? Can you imagine a German commander during World War II stepping up to General Patton, saluting him and saying, "Herr General, we would like permission to bomb your troops, destroy your tanks and wreck all your plans." Surely General Patton's reply would have been unprintable! Yet that is the situation we find in the book of Job. It is God who initiates a test of Job's character and proposes to Satan that Job be put to the test. Satan then responds with alacrity and asks permission from God to take away Job's prosperity so that he will curse God to His face.

The latter part of chapter 1 records the terrible results. One by one the props are pulled out from under Job's sense of well-being. In one tragic day Job learns that first all his oxen and donkeys were driven away by enemy raids and his servants slain. Next, word comes that his sheep have all been killed by a terrible electric storm, or perhaps a volcanic eruption. Crowding upon the heels of that comes the news that Job's great herd of camels, the true wealth of the oriental world, has been wiped out by a raid of Chaldeans. Finally comes the heart-rending news that his seven sons and three daughters were enjoying a birthday celebration together when a great tornado struck and the house was demolished and all his children killed. The malignancy of Satan is revealed in that he struck to the full extent of his permission. He went to the ultimate boundaries God had permitted and took away everything Job had.

Job's reaction to this is magnificent: "Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped. And he said, 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord'" (1:20, 21, NASB).

It is clear that Job has won the first round of testing. Take away the possessions of a man like Job and he still will not curse God to His face. He still loves God and follows Him and recognizes God's right to do with him as He will.

But the test is not over. There is much worse yet to come. Before the book is finished we will see levels of pride in Job of which he is totally unaware, and we will begin to understand what God is after in Job's life (and in ours) by this kind of testing.

Again it is God that initiates further action against Job. Satan is rather taken aback by Job's steadfastness but responds to God's challenge by asking for a change in the rules." 'Put forth Thy hand, now, and touch his bone and his flesh; he will curse Thee to Thy face. ' So the Lord said to Satan, 'Behold, he is in your power, only spare his life' " (2:5, 6 NASB).

So Satan is given renewed access to Job and without warning Job is suddenly stricken with a series of terrible boils or carbuncles. Some scholars think this was a form of leprosy. Others think it was a variety of elephantiasis which not only covers the body with running, putrefying sores, but also causes swelling and distortion. Whatever it was it rendered Job a pitiful spectacle; a repulsive hulk of a man, swollen, disfigured and hurting.

As the malady continues, Job's wife is the first whose faith succumbs. She turns on him and says, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die" (2:9 NASB).

Just as Satan used Eve as his instrument to get at Adam in the Garden of Eden, so the assault upon Job's emotional life comes through his wife's failure of faith. She advises him to do two things: apostatize and then commit suicide.

But once again Job's faith proves triumphant. He gently rebukes his wife and reasserts the right of God to be sovereign in human affairs. Job's wife had the philosophy that life ought to be pleasant, and if it was not there was no use living. Job at least understands that the reason we are on earth is not necessarily to have a good time. When the pressure comes, life is still worth living. Job argues that we take God's joy and pleasure with gladness and gratitude. If He then chooses to send something difficult, shall we abandon the gratitude and begin to curse Him in protest? To do so is to allow Satan the victory.

Clearly Job has won again. The score is now 2-0 in favor of Job. But Satan is not through. He had obtained permission from God to assault this man in every area of his being. He has taken away Job's possessions and all his children, and now he has taken away also his health and the pleasure of living, even to the degree of making Job feel abandoned by his wife.

Satan now proceeds to attack the first stronghold of Job's spirit. In the closing verses of chapter 2 he moves up his heavy artillery, and the big guns he seeks to employ are, to say the least, most unexpected and unusual." Now when Job's three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, they came each one from his own place, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite; and they made an appointment together to come to sympathize with him and comfort him" (v. 11, NASB).

At this point the whole book slightly shifts its focus. We no longer are looking only at Job but now at his controversy with these three friends, and their discourses occupy the major part of the book. The primary attack on Job's faith now comes not alone through his physical trials but through an attack on his spiritual relationship with God by means of these three well-meaning friends.

When the friends arrive they are shocked at what they see. They can hardly believe their eyes. This monstrous repulsive hulk of a man--could he really be their dear old friend Job? Could this obnoxious creature sitting on a heap of ashes, scraping himself with a broken piece of pottery, be the man they had known and loved? They

tear their coats, sprinkle dust on their heads in oriental mourning, and finally end up sitting on the ground around Job observing him in silence for seven days.

While they were sitting there they were thinking, and what they thought will come out in the arguments they present in the next section of the book. It is enough for us to see at this point that while they were waiting in silence around Job they came to the conclusion that he was suffering under the hand of God for some terrible sin he must have committed and that it was therefore right for God to make him suffer this way. Their hearts were hardening against Job. They had come to comfort him but in their heart of hearts they believed that Job deserved what he was getting.

Act II, Dialogue with Three Friends

There are three cycles of dialogue with Job and his friends. They try various approaches with Job: first, sarcasm and irony; then they appeal to Job's honesty; finally they accuse him of specific crimes and misdeeds, and in the end fall silent and sit miffed and sulking because they feel Job has insulted them. In all their speeches they attack Job's integrity with the argument that if God is indeed Just, the righteous are always blessed and the wicked suffer. If an individual is suffering, it must therefore be because something is wrong in his life. Their explanation of suffering is a simple matter of cause and effect. It is neat and tidy and explains everything--that is, unless you happen to be the sufferer!

Before the dialogue begins, Job raises three questions. It is evident that after months of suffering a change has taken place in him. He no longer submits without question to the will of God, but begins to ask why. first, "Why was I ever born?" His misery is so intense that he would like to have his birth day blotted out of existence and left unrecorded on the calendar. His second question is, "Why didn't I die at birth?" Life has been totally meaningless, Job infers, and it would have been better to have died at birth. Then he gives his view of death as a time of rest and quiet after the tumult and trouble of life. His third question is: "Why can't I die now?" He is not thinking of suicide, but only desires that God would take his life.

After Job asks these questions the first cycle of the replies of the friends is introduced. Though these friends propose the same solution to the problem of suffering they approach it in three distinct ways, according to their personalities. They might be nicknamed Eliphaz the Eloquent, Bildad the Brutal, and Zophar the Zealous.

Eliphaz, the first speaker, is evidently the oldest, for there is a smoothness about him and a courtesy (at least at the beginning) that indicates he has learned to say unpleasant things in gracious ways. His first argument breaks down into six main points. He begins in chapter 4 by saying, in effect, "Follow your own advice, Job. You have been a counselor to many and you have been able to put your finger on their problem and help them deal with it. You delivered them and found the key to what was troubling them, and now your turn has come. Follow your own advice and you will be relieved." His second point is that the basic principle of life is that the righteous are never punished; only the unrighteous suffer. Eliphaz goes on to tell Job that if he will fear God and admit his sin, things will be all right. He claims to have learned this truth from a vision in which he saw that God is of such holiness and purity that even the angels stand defiled before Him. What chance can a man have, then, to claim sinlessness? Though this is accurate theology it is unbalanced, for it sees God only as a God of justice and knows nothing of His love, compassion and forgiveness nor of the discipline and training of the Father's heart.

In chapter 5 Eliphaz argues that trouble comes only from sin, and he slyly suggests that the loss of Job's children was the result of Job's personal evil. He then warns Job not to play games with God because God knows too much. Finally he closes with a section which says, in effect, "Just give up and God will bless you."

Job's reply to this is found in chapters 6 and 7. In chapter 6 Job rebukes his friends, stating that he has a right to complain because of his terrible suffering. "For the arrows of the Almighty are in me; my spirit drinks their poison; the terrors of God are arrayed against me" (6:4).

Then he speaks of his inability to bear more pain. "What does God think I am made of, stone or bronze that He subjects me to all this?" (see 6:12).

Then Job expresses his irritation at the misunderstanding of his friends. He says in effect, "You friends are like *the* mountain brook that is full of water in the wintertime when no one needs it, but when the hot summer sun comes out and we long for the refreshing of the water, it is nothing but a dry, gravel-filled stream bed. You said you came to comfort me and all you have given me is trouble."

Job then turns to God and complains to Him about the hardness of his present experience. He views the future as absolutely hopeless, and in the honesty of his despair, in baffled bewilderment, he cries, "Have I sinned? What have I done to Thee, O watcher of men? Why hast Thou set me as Thy target, so that I am a burden to myself?" (7:20 NASB).

In chapter 8 the second friend takes up the attack. His name is Bildad the Shuhite, but we have called him Bildad the Brutal. His style is to ask questions in an effort to focus everything into logical framework. He is a cold intellectual thinker who debates the issue at the level of the mind.

His first question is, "Can God do wrong?" He feels that Job has slandered God and he moves on from his basic premise to draw the logical conclusion, "If your children have sinned against God He has delivered them into the power of their transgression. When they died on that tragic day you can only conclude it was because they did something terribly wrong." He supports his argument further by various platitudes of the day, pointing out how God always cuts off those who seem to prosper because of evil in their midst, and he closes with an exhortation to Job to repent.

Job replies to Bildad in chapters 9 and 10. He explains the difficulty he has with God, for he accepts the principle that trouble comes only because of sin. He would have analyzed another's problems along the same line before his own trials began, but in the long dark hours of searching his own heart he has not been able to put his finger upon any sin he has not already dealt with. His dilemma is, "I am not aware of sin in myself, yet I am in deep trouble; therefore, the problem must lie in God." But he has no way of examining God, and he states this in very eloquent terms. God's wisdom is far beyond man's and He exercises power which can only make man tremble in awe. His invisibility makes it difficult to deal with Him and His sovereignty is overwhelming. "If I called and He answered me, I could not believe that He was listening to my voice. For He bruises me with a tempest, and multiplies my wounds without cause" (9:16,17 NASB).

He goes on to describe how life becomes incomprehensible when there is no understanding of God. The reference point is then gone and one cannot make any sense of life. But in verses 33 through 35, out of the deep darkness that surrounds this suffering saint, a ray of light breaks through. It represents the first awareness of what is missing. "There is no umpire between us, who may lay his hand upon us both. Let Him remove His rod from me, and let not dread of Him terrify me. Then I would speak and not fear Him; but I am not like that in myself" (NASB).

Job at last begins to feel, deep in his bones, the terrible gulf between man and God that must be bridged by another. God is laying the foundation in Job's understanding for the tremendous revelation which comes in the New Testament: God at last becomes Man.

But in chapter 10 the darkness closes in again around Job. He pleads with God to let him know what is wrong, or at least to leave him alone, for anything is better than his present misery.

Every argument which has ever occurred to a suffering saint is brought out here in the book of Job. Every nuance of suffering, whether mental or physical, is explored to its utmost throughout the book. All the tormenting questions are asked. All the haunting dilemmas are faced, so that anyone who is suffering will find that Job has felt whatever he has felt and has articulated it eloquently. The questions are not answered at this point, but they will be answered before we are through, yet in a way we could never anticipate.

In chapter 11 Zophar the Naamathite (we can call him Zophar the Zealous) moves up to bat and opens with a scorching rebuke to what he sees as Job's sinful folly. He accuses Job of wordiness, foolishness, mockery and of self-righteous smugness. He says Job is only getting what is coming to him and not even all of that. He describes Job's stupid ignorance in contrast with God's deep wisdom and inscrutable ways. He closes with

the shining possibilities that are ahead if Job will only repent.

The problem with these friends is that though much of their theology is correct, yet they answer Job's words without trying to find out what lies behind them. They comment on what he says without understanding his agony. Further, though their theology is correct as far as it goes, it is very incomplete. They speak with the utmost confidence that what they are saying is the final word on the subject. There is apparently no understanding that perhaps there are aspects of God and dimensions to His wisdom that they have not yet seen. The third thing wrong is that they never pray with Job. They never ask God for help to open their minds and illuminate their understanding so they can help their friend. The book is filled with prayers, but they are all prayers of Job crying out to God in the midst of his sufferings.

This is the difference between mere theology and the experience of a man taught by the Spirit. Theology can be very clear and right, but when one is dealing with the hurting problems of life a deeper dimension must be added--that compassion Jesus manifested, that sympathy that identifies with hurt and opens the door of the spirit to receive more light.

The first round ends with Job's sarcastic defense, found in chapters 12 through 14. Job sees his friends as know-it-all's who deal with elementary truths which everyone knows. Consequently they have not helped him but are really in the same boat with him, being subject to the same judgments from God that they warn him about. He therefore requests they leave him alone with God, and only asks they will do him the courtesy of listening carefully to the case he seeks to present before Jehovah.

In chapter 13 Job is like a man in prison, planning his case for his appearance before God. He divides his case into four major points. The first is a plea for certain conditions he feels must be granted before he can talk with God. One is that God will lift the pain and anguish he is now going through so he does not have to speak out of torment. Second, that God would so veil His presence that Job will not be terrified by His awesomeness.

He next pleads for the knowledge of the charges which are against him, and protests the silence of God in His apparent anger with him. In chapter 14 in two marvelously moving passages, Job brings out the helplessness and hopelessness of man before God. Job feels that man is helpless to control his affairs but God judges this limited helpless man for things he cannot help. Because of his sense of hopelessness, he cries out for a kind of purgatory after life is finished. He sees life only as a natural man, with the present existence as the only truly important thing, and if one does not make something out of the present experience he will never have another chance. So the first cycle of dialogue ends with Job's stout insistence that he has done no wrong, so he cannot understand what is behind his torment.

Act III, Second Round of Speeches

In chapters 15-21, the second round of speeches is recorded. For this the friends gird up their loins, sharpen their spears and come at Job again. Once again Eliphaz the Eloquent is the first speaker. He charges Job with presumptuous words and with pretentious claims, and then supports it with his narrow and worn-out theology. He points out the general nature of the depravity of man and the effects of the Fall upon human life. He rightly says that there is no one who is clean and righteous before God, but he fails to point out specifically what it is that Job has done. As a matter of fact he himself is guilty of the very thing he sets before--Job because he too is part of the human race, yet there is never a word of self-examination from him.

In a long passage Eliphaz argues again from experience, pointing out that God will never let a man get by with wickedness, and therefore if one is being punished he must be wicked. It is the same old tired thrust at Job: he must be guilty of some terrible sin.

In chapters 16 and 17 Job answers Eliphaz. He does not really know what to say, but he is trying to be honest. The great thing about Job is that he is no hypocrite. He never tries to cover over or set his case in a better light than it truly is. He simply blurts out all the hurt and anguish of his heart as best he can.

Again he rebukes his friends for their misunderstanding and windy words. Though Job cannot see it, it is clear to us that Satan is there in the background using these friends as channels for what the apostle Paul calls "the

fiery darts of the wicked one" (see Eph. 6:16). It is a good reminder to beware lest we become a channel for Satan's accusations against someone who is suffering as Job is suffering here.

Job goes on to state the facts as he now sees them. He can only conclude that God must hate him, though he does not know why, for He lets men insult him and seems to totally disregard Job's innocence. Despite these strong feelings a gleam of faith emerges at this point in that Job still sees that God must supply the answers to these questions, for man is totally helpless to solve them in his ignorance. Job concludes this reply by praying for relief, largely from his friends. He has heard all their arguments and knows they do not help, and in the final part of chapter 17 he sinks back again into the darkness of despair.

Bildad the Brutal then takes up the cudgels with the same tired line of argument as before. He is a good example of what has been described as "an evangelical crab." To this attack Job replies with a piteous plea. He beseeches mercy from his friends and describes his own bafflement at what is happening to him. His feelings of isolation from all are very vivid. "My breath is offensive to my wife, and I am loathsome to my own brothers. Even young children despise me; I rise up and they speak against me. All my associates abhor me, and those I love have turned against me" (19:17-19, NASB).

But once again faith responds and he utters the great anticipation of bodily resurrection for which he is famous: "I know that my Redeemer [Vindicator] lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth. Even after my skin is flayed, yet without my flesh I shall see God; whom I myself shall behold, and whom my eyes shall see and not another" (19:25-27, NASB).

Slowly, through the anguish and gloom of this man's heart born out of passion and pathos, comes the dawning realization that God is working out a great and mighty purpose, and that one of these days God Himself (whom Job has never failed to see as the God of great majesty and power) will be visibly present before men. Thus with a slow but certain light, Job is gradually learning that though life is essentially a mystery, God is working out His own purposes.

Job ends the discourse by warning his friends to be careful about judging him. "If you say, 'How shall we persecute him?' and 'What pretext for a case against him can we find?' then be afraid of the sword for yourselves, for wrath brings the punishment of the sword, so that you may know there is judgment" (19:28,29 NASB).

Despite Job's tremendous flash of hope, Zophar the Zealous looses a blast of impassioned words in a strong outburst of emotions against Job. These three men represent what the New Testament would call pharasaism: the appearance of being orthodox, yet without true godliness. Pharasaism is one of the most deadly enemies of truth, for it is so easily self-deceptive. Chapter 20 represents Zophar's last appearance in the book. His argument is that the prosperity of the wicked is always short and his joy is but for a moment. He goes on to describe the punishment of the wicked as being terrible and always certain.

Job's response this time is very reasoned and calm. Though sometimes he speaks rather sharply to his friends, at other times, perhaps when the pain is not as intense, he is able to speak more dispassionately. After a reasoned appeal for a careful hearing, Job sets forth the facts about the wicked. They often live lives that are for the most part untroubled. They openly defy God and yet prosper. God's judgments upon them are infrequent and long delayed, and even when they come they seem to be uneven. He concludes the second cycle of dialogue by chiding his friends for their hidden surmises and their unsupported convictions. His closing words are: "How then will you vainly comfort me, for your answers remain full of falsehood?" (21:34 NASB).

Act IV, Final Round of Speeches

The third and final round of speeches is found in chapters 22 through 31. Eliphaz begins the round again, but whereas once he had been calm and courteous he now is clearly upset and angry, and begins to pour out invective and accusation upon poor Job. He accuses Job of imaginary motives and even stoops to inventing totally false charges against Job. In a rather patronizing way, he assumes insulting concepts which he feels Job holds and ends with inappropriate exhortations (though phrased in beautifully expressive language) to Job to

confess his sin and return to God, with the hope that God will again pour out blessings upon him.

In a most moving reply Job does not attempt to answer the arguments of his friends any further. He simply cries out of a troubled heart, expressing before them but addressed to God, the deepest problem he now feels. He has two basic questions: Why is God absent and Why is God silent? As Job's pain increases and his frustration grows, his basic longing for God remains, and though he searches everywhere to find God nothing seems to work. Yet despite this, a slowly growing faith in God's justice sustains him and confidence in God's ultimate purpose encourages him. Nevertheless, he is terribly afraid of God and dreads a confrontation with Him. It is in this section that his progressing faith produces the highest expression of trust found in the book. "But He knows the way I take. When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (23:10, NASB).

In chapter 24 Job faces his second question: Why is God silent? He raises the complaint many have raised about God, Why doesn't He judge evil? Job points out that thieves and scoundrels flourish, poor people suffer terribly, having to scratch for a living, being exposed to the elements and exploited by the rich and yet seem neglected by God. Criminals strike in the darkness and yet God delays His justice. Thus, though the three friends assert that evil finds invariable retribution, Job points out that the facts of life are quite different.

In a final blunt address, Bildad the Brutal restates his argument that God is all-powerful and man is inherently sinful. Then he concludes: "How then can a man be just with God? Or how can he be clean who is born of woman? If even the moon has no brightness and the stars are not pure in His sight, how much less man, that maggot, and the son of man, that worm!" (25:4-6 NASB).

In chapter 26, Job concludes the dialogue with the friends. His answer to Bildad is one rich in irony. He sarcastically declares that the friends have been of no help at all to him, for he quite agrees that there is a mystery in God that no man can plumb. Even when man recognizes God's omnipresence, omnipotence and omniscience, still he cannot explain all of God's ways.

In a closing soliloquy, covering chapters 27 through 31, Job reviews the situation. He states again his sense of unshakeable integrity, for there are facts he cannot deny and yet he must agree with much his friends have stated. In a passage of moving beauty he traces man's search for wisdom, comparing it with the hardships men endure in mining the mountains for treasures of gold and silver. He concludes that wisdom is illusive for it cannot be found by searching, cannot be purchased with gold and cannot be known in nature. The only way to obtain it, he asserts, is from God, for God knows what it is, where it is and how to find it.

In painful reminiscence, Job looks back on the good old days of his prosperity and blessing, recounting in detail the honor that was shown him and the power of his influence over others. He contrasts that with the painful present where he faces the mockery of men, the anguish of pain and--the ultimate torment--the silence of God. But once again he searches his life for a clue as to why he is being so tormented. There have been, he says, no sexual misdeeds, no injustice toward his servants or the poor, no trust in wealth, no secret idolatry, no gloating over other's misfortunes, no stinginess or hypocrisy and no polluting or misuse of his land. He can find no reason in himself why God continues to allow this pain to go on.

With this, the words of Job are ended. He has nothing further to say. Baffled, questioning, tormented, yet unwilling to forsake God, he falls silent.

Act V, The Man from Buz

At this point a noteworthy break in the book occurs. Another voice is heard, that of a young man named Elihu. He is identified as the son of Barachel (which means "God blesses") the Buzite. In the opening of the book we learn that Job lived in the land of Uz, but there was a nearby land called Buz. These two lands were named for two brothers who lived in the days of Noah following the flood. Elihu came from the land of Buz.

Commentators seem to differ widely in their view of Elihu. Some regard him as a brash young man, speaking out of the cocksure arrogance of youth, who tells the older men how they are wrong. Others see him as merely repeating the arguments of the three friends without adding much to them. Still other commentators view Elihu's discourse as a kind of meaningless interruption, of which God takes no notice at all. But still others

(with whom I agree) see Elihu as playing a very important part in this book.

It is noteworthy that at the end of the book when God rebukes the friends of Job, Elihu is not included. Also he is given a very prominent part in the drama. His message occupies the next five chapters and constitutes one of the major discourses of the book. And he always speaks with courtesy and sensitivity to Job, despite his strong feelings. He seems to recognize the depth of Job's suffering and always speaks with understanding. Probably the most important thing about Elihu is that he claims to speak not out of experience as the other men did, but from revelation. He claims that "the Almighty gives [man] understanding" (32:8 NASB). Elihu, therefore, comes into the book as the answer to Job's cry for an explanation. God replies to Job in a way he did not expect, for suddenly a young man who has been listening all along speaks up and appears as witness to the Mediator for whom Job has been asking throughout the book. Elihu thus appears as a kind of John the Baptist of the Old Testament. He begins where the friends began, but ends with words very similar to the voice of God when God ultimately appears on the scene.

In chapter 32, with a courteous word of explanation, Elihu states that he has not entered the discussion before because he felt his youth might make his judgments seem immature, but now since old age has not solved the problem of Job's suffering he feels pressured to speak. He opens with an invitation to Job to dialogue with him, promising that he will give only honest words and speak without partiality.

Then in 33:8 Elihu begins to analyze Job's view of God. He says Job sees God as capricious, acting as men do out of His feelings and moods; and his answer is that in this Job is not right, for God is much greater than man. Further, Elihu says, Job claims that God is silent, but actually God speaks in two ways: (1) in dreams and (2) in pain, even repeating Himself patiently so that man may get the message. The essence of Elihu's argument is that affliction is sent by a God of love in order to discipline and purify. To this Job is invited to reply, but he remains silent.

In chapter 34 Elihu goes on to take up Job's view of God in further detail, opening with an invitation to all who listen to join in the judgment. Elihu claims that though Job is patient with his attackers, nevertheless his view of God makes him echo the arguments of the ungodly: "What man is like Job, who drinks up scoffing like water, who goes in company with evildoers and walks with wicked men? For he has said, 'It profits a man nothing that he should take delight in God'" (34:7-9).

In effect, Elihu says Job is saying, "What advantage is it to me to behave myself? I might as well have sinned." But in a powerful passage Elihu reveals the truth about the character of God. He cannot be unjust because He cannot deny Himself, and since He judges men He Himself must be just. Further, He is beyond accountability to man, for no man authorized Him to act and nothing functions without Him. Actually it is He who teaches man what justice is, for man cannot govern without the concept of justice and he learns impartial justice from observing God. Yet God does not need to investigate when He judges and will not accept outward reformation, but requires inward repentance. Therefore, the consensus of the wise is that Job speaks from some degree of ignorance of God and needs further enlightenment.

Chapters 36 and 37 conclude Elihu's argument by presenting a magnificent description of the glory of God. He begins with a claim to speak from divine authority, saying: "For truly my words are not false; One who is perfect in knowledge is with you" (36:4, NASB). Some commentators have thought that he is referring to himself as "perfect in knowledge" and is therefore a brash and arrogant young man.

But in chapter 37, verse 16, he asks Job: "Do you know about the layers of the thick clouds, the wonders of one perfect in knowledge...?" (NASB). Obviously he here refers to God and his claim, therefore, in chapter 36 is that he is speaking with the wisdom and authority of God, who is perfect in knowledge.

He points out that Job is in a rather perilous position because he is so preoccupied with justice that he comes close to blasphemy and judgment in his view of God. If he goes on in this vein his case will be hopeless, for God's wisdom is inscrutable and He is varied in His purposes, being great in power and justice, and unimpressed by man's conceit.

Act VI, God's Message to Job

This brings us to the climax of the book of Job, where the voice of Jehovah Himself is heard, speaking out of the whirlwind. In the first of God's two speeches to Job He sets forth a series of questions designed to test Job's competence to argue with the Almighty. The language and poetic style of this passage is magnificent, unequalled in all of literature.

Jehovah first asks concerning the earth, as to where Job was when its foundations were laid. And then selecting its most prominent feature, the sea, God proceeds to question Job as to how the sea was born and how it is kept within limits. He probes Job's understanding on the processes of day and night and what lies beneath the sea and beyond the boundaries of life and behind the horizons of history. He continues to ask about common mysteries, such as the source of light, the uses of snow and hail and the processes of the storm and ice and frost.

Then He explores the heavens, questioning Job as to his power to bring forth the spring, symbolized by the Pleiades; or the winter season, represented by Orion; or to control the Zodiac or the influence of the Great Bear in the north. Finally He examines Job's ability to handle God's daily chores of feeding the animals, watching over their birth processes, giving them varied instinctive controls--the wide-ranging freedom of the wild ass, the independence of the wild ox, the stupidity of the ostrich, the courage of the horse and the vision of the hawk and the eagle.

In reply to all this, Job admits his total incompetence to contend with the almighty and declares himself unwilling to speak further. But though he is silenced, he is not yet convinced. He has not discovered yet the basic problem of his life or learned what God had in mind when He invited Satan to try him in the first place. So, in Jehovah's second speech out of the whirlwind He uses two symbolic beasts to teach Job the final truth he needs to learn. Once again he subjects Job to a series of questions, but this time as to his ability to morally govern the world and mankind. "Look on everyone who is proud, and humble him; and tread down the wicked where they stand. Hide them in the dust together; bind them in the hidden place. Then I will also confess to you, that your own right hand can save you" (40:12-14 NASB).

In the next sections God brings before Job two amazing animals, one called Behemoth, a land animal; and one called Leviathan, a sea creature. Commentators have had difficulty identifying these in the natural world. Some think Behemoth is either the hippopotamus or the elephant, perhaps even the rhinoceros. They feel that Leviathan is the crocodile, though some think it could be a whale. But the language employed here clearly goes beyond the natural realm. These beasts seem to be symbolic of that which is invisible and supernatural. Behemoth, the land animal, means in Hebrew "beasts," and Leviathan means "the folded one." Isaiah in chapter 27 refers to Leviathan thus: "In that day the Lord will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, with His fierce and great and mighty sword, even Leviathan the twisted serpent; and He will kill the dragon who lives in the sea" (v. 1 NASB).

This brings to mind the two beasts found in Revelation 13, one which comes from the sea and reigns over the waters, representing the multitudes of the people of the earth. The other beast comes out of the land; but behind both is still a third creature called the Great Dragon, and we are told plainly that he is Satan who gives his power and authority to the Beast. Thus, here in Job, we have a tie to the opening scene of the book where Satan appears before God and is given authority over the life of Job. Behemoth represents the Satanic twist in man's fallen nature against which we all struggle and which the Bible calls "the flesh," with its continual desire to assert itself and live for itself. The second beast represents the world with its vast influence upon each of us, pressuring us to conform to its philosophies and reflecting the values and attitudes of a satanic view of life.

One Bible commentator has put it this way: "It seems probable that Behemoth represents the evil one acting in the animal and carnal elements of man's own constitution, and that Leviathan symbolizes the evil one energizing as man's external enemy. Behemoth is the enemy within us. Leviathan is the enemy without us."

In magnificent poetry, these two supernatural animals are described. Behemoth is viewed as self-sufficient, self-centered and totally self-confident; while Leviathan appears as untamable, unconquerable in his fierceness, fearful and awe-inspiring, irresistible in strength, and yet characterized totally by pride. The secret of his life is revealed in Job 41:33,34: "Nothing on earth is like him, one made without fear. He looks on everything that is

high, he is king over all the sons of pride."(NASB).

These are the beasts that Job is up against. God's question is: "Job, are you able to handle these?" Job is here given a clear revelation of the reason behind his illness. Not his own failure or willful misdeeds, but a serious problem so imbedded in his nature that he is not even aware that it exists, yet it is destroying him. It is with this God must deal.

Chapter 42 sets forth Job's repentance, consisting of a new view of God Himself and a totally new view of his own life. He says in response to God's charges, "You're right, Lord. I have been ignorant" (see v. 3), and again, "You're right, Lord. I have been arrogant" (see vv. 4,5). He concludes: "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees Thee; therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes" (42:5,6 NASB).

Thus Job learns that the ultimate problem of life is within us, but it is a problem that only God can handle. We are unable, totally unequipped to handle it by ourselves. All we can do is put ourselves in His gracious hands and allow Him to work out the circumstances of our lives, to teach us what He desires us to learn. This is surely what Jesus has in mind in the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3).

The closing scenes of the book record Jehovah's rebuke of the friends and His vindication of Job before them. They are required to bring an offering of sacrifice and to request Job to make intercession for them before their sin is forgiven and set aside.

The book closes with Jehovah's complete restoration of Job, granting him double blessing in all that he once possessed, including even seven more sons and three more daughters. Job's closing days are recorded: "And after this Job lived 140 years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, four generations. And Job died, an old man full of days."

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