

THE BOOK OF JOB
The Substance of a Lecture
Delivered by C. C. Walker

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Elihu

In Job 32., where Elihu is first introduced, it seems as if he comes to answer Job in God's stead (33:6). Also notice in chapter 42:7–9, that God's wrath is not said to be kindled against Elihu, while it was kindled against the three friends of Job. Is it correct to believe that Elihu spoke the truth with regard to Job when he said, "Thinkest thou this to be right, that thou saidst, My righteousness is more than God's? For thou saidst, What advantage will it be unto thee? and, What profit shall I have, if I be cleansed from my sin?" (35:2–3). If so, then could it be said that Job "sinned not with his lips" (2:10). If what Elihu said of Job was not true, then would his testimony as to the state of the dead, in Job 34:14–15, have any weight in an argument?

ANSWER.—Elihu's construction of Job's case is altogether different from that of the three friends who were reprov'd by God. He imputes no iniquity to Job, as they do. He finds fault with him only in so far as he justifies himself at God's expense, imputing cruelty to God—"He counteth me as one of his enemies" (19:11). "Why persecute ye me as God?" (5:22). This, Elihu argues, was in effect saying, "My righteousness is more than God's." And God himself argues that way also: "Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?" (40:8). When it is said, in ch. 2:10, that Job sinned not with his lips, it is with a qualification: "In *all this*, Job sinned not." Absolutely, he did sin with his lips, as Elihu and God himself declare, and as Job most heartily recognised at last (40:4–5: 42:3–6). Job was "a perfect man," but not absolutely sinless. The New Testament Job is the only absolutely "perfect man." *He* never "cursed his day." In the *Christadelphian*, 1902, March and April, is a lecture on the Book of Job, which may interest you.

PAUL says: "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope." Under this inspired guidance, we are constrained to study the Book of Job with the end defined in view.

But there are more specific allusions that help in that direction. In Ezekiel 14:20, "Noah, Daniel, and Job" are referred to by God, through the prophet, as pre-eminently righteous men; and this incites us to the study of Job's character as revealed in his book. Then, again, James, in his epistle (chap. 5:11), refers to Job as "an example of suffering affliction, and of patience." He says: "Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." We can easily conceive the futility of this exhortation in case of ignorance of Job's history and character.

The Scriptures quoted leave us without doubt as to Job's personal reality, and of the reality of the history of the book that bears his name. Some of the learned have reduced Job to a myth, like the fabled Jupiter or Neptune. They have done the like with Abraham and others. Their great confutation is coming with the reappearance of these ancients in the land of the living. Then, indeed, the wise will be taken "in their own craftiness."

It is proposed to look at the design in the Book of Job and its structure, to briefly consider the time and place of Job in Bible history, and attempt an epitome of the arguments of Job and his three friends, and of the speech of Elihu and the divine conclusion.

The Design of the Book

A study of the Book of Job in the light of the truth yields definite conclusion as to its design. It has evidently been written and preserved to show the character of God, to illustrate and justify His dealings in chastening the righteous, to exhibit in Job the perfecting of a son of God, and to indicate in that work the nature, place, and function of “the Satan.”

The book was designed to preserve this illustration for all time, but it was especially valuable to the servants of God in the centuries before Christ, when God manifested in the flesh, was still a matter of faith and hope; and the making perfect, through suffering of the Son of God, a still unrevealed work of God in the earth.

The Structure of the Book

We find, upon attentive study, that the Book of Job naturally divides into five portions. There is (1) the prologue, or introductory historic outline. (2) The colloquy between Job and his three friends, in which Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar each speak three times (with the exception of the last named, who only speaks twice), Job replying in each instance. Then (3) comes the argument of Elihu, quite on another plane, which is abruptly followed by (4) the answer of God Himself to Job in a majestic passage that reveals to him things that he had not seen before. Then, finally (5), comes the epilogue, or conclusion, which shows, as James says, “the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.”

To rightly appreciate the book of Job, it requires to be read through at a single sitting, which might perhaps occupy about three hours. It is, as it were, listening to the conduct of a case in a court of law. If we were to listen to scraps of evidence, only occasionally, we should have difficulty in coming to a conclusion. A sustained and connected effort admits of clearer comparison, and will produce better results.

The Time and Place of Job in Bible History

As with other books, the most diverse opinions have been held respecting the book of Job, some referring it to patriarchal times, and others making it of later date than the Babylonian Captivity. All the evidence appears to justify, and indeed necessitate, the former view. There is no reference to Israel, or to the giving of the Law, throughout the book, although the subject would most naturally have been introduced had this mighty work of God been known to the disputants. On the other hand there is reference to Adam (chap. 31:33), where Job says, “If I cover my transgression as Adam by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom.” There is also a reference to the flood (chap. 22:16), when Eliphaz

speaks of “the wicked . . . which were cut down out of time, whose foundation is overflowed with a flood.”

The conclusion from these facts is, that the history comes in in the patriarchal times before the giving of the Law. This is in harmony with the geographical allusions of the book of Job. He is said to belong to “the land of Uz.” From the genealogy in Genesis 10., we discover that Uz was the son of Aram the son of Shem. Aram gave his name to the Mesopotamian district, called in Genesis Aram Naharaim and Padan Aram, and Uz, migrating further southward, gave his name to a district near Edom. There was another Uz, some four hundred years later, the descendant of Esau, but it seems probable that the country was named after Shem’s grandson. In either case we are led to the same locality, the north of Arabia. (Compare Lament. 4:21.)

Then again in the descriptions given of Job’s friends, we are led to the same districts and the same patriarchal times. Eliphaz the *Temanite* takes his description from Teman, the grandson of Esau, who gave his name to that district of the south, through which Israel passed in the days of the Exodus. Then again Bildad the *Shuhite* is of Abrahamic descent, as traceable in Gen. 25:2 Shuhah was a son of Abraham by Keturah, and one of those whom “he sent away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, *eastward, unto the east country.*” Of Zophar the *Naamathite* we cannot glean anything quite so definite, but he appears to have belonged to a country of Edom. Elihu is described as son of Barachel the *Buzite*. This also reveals an Abrahamic relationship. Buz was the son of Nahor, Abraham’s brother, and would naturally give his name to some country east of the Jordan.

It is discoverable from Bible chronology that Abraham lived from B.C. 2141–1966; Isaac, 2041–1861; Jacob, 1931–1834; Joseph, 1890–1780; Moses, 1706–1586.

From the considerations above indicated, it seems certain that Job was contemporary with Joseph, and perhaps with Moses, to whom tradition has ascribed the authorship of the book. From chapter 32. 16, Elihu would seem to have been the writer. That the history deals with matters before the giving of the Law seems certain from the silence of the book concerning that mighty development. On the other hand, that it deals with events considerably after Abraham’s time appears equally evident from the patronymics “Temanite,” “Shuhite,” “Naamathite,” and “Buzite.”

Epitome of the Book

It is somewhat difficult to briefly indicate the substance of the book of Job, especially of the arguments that have proved such a matter of contention for all ages and generations during which the book has been current. Nevertheless, it will be profitable to make the attempt, if only for the sake of securing a strong outline of the picture, in which the details can be inserted at leisure. We have already spoken of the design and structure of the book; it now remains only to as briefly as possible pass in review the substance.

The prologue introduces Job as “a perfect and upright man, who feared God and eschewed evil,” and who was wealthy to the extent of being “the greatest of all the men

of the east” As an illustration of his perfection and uprightness, his priestly ministration on behalf of his sons and daughters is instanced. His prosperity stirs the envy of “the Satan,” who figures as a hypocritical worshipper among the “sons of God.” We need not pause to point out the difference between “the Satan” (in the book of Job “Satan” is always found with the article) and Satan of church and chapel belief. The former is, as the margin truly indicates, simply “the adversary” contemporary with Job. The latter is a figment of the imagination. The clerical Satan does not “worship among the sons of God,” but they say of him, that

“Satan trembles when he sees

The weakest saint upon his knees.”

If we would find a New Testament parallel to Job’s Satan, we may look at Judas, who was just such an adversary to *the* Son of God among “the sons of God.” In the prophecy of Zechariah, chap. 3., the prophet had a vision of the adversary at the right hand of Joshua, the high priest, which was a symbolic representation of things afterwards fulfilled in the experiences of Jesus at the hands of those who “sat in Moses’ seat,” and even of one of his own disciples. These remarks sufficiently indicate to intelligent enquirers the true nature of “the Satan” of Job’s experience.

There is something suggestive in the question that the Lord addresses to “the Satan,” “Whence comest thou?” And also in the Satan’s evasive reply, “From going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it.” It is not always convenient for the adversary to explain “whence he comes”; and no matter whence it may be, he does not really belong of right to the company of the sons of God. To the wicked God saith, “What hast thou to do, to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my word into thy mouth?” (Psa. 1:16). “The adversary” has only a tolerated and temporary, though necessary, place in the divine economy, just as “the son of perdition” had among the disciples, “that the Scriptures might be fulfilled.” A recognition of this revealed truth is indispensable and helpful to Job’s brethren of all ages.

Yahweh drew the attention of the Satan to Job. “Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?” The adversary suggested that Job’s allegiance to God was of a purely mercenary character, and that if the divine blessings were removed, he would at once renounce God.

To show that this was not so, and for the perfecting of Job, God delivered him into the Satan’s hand, and one calamity after another stripped him of all his substance — oxen, sheep, camels, children, and all. Job took it patiently. “Naked came I from my mother’s womb,” said he, “and naked shall I return thither. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.”

Upon this, when the Satan came again among the worshippers, God addressed him again as beforetime, adding concerning Job, “Still he holdeth fast his integrity, although

thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause.” We must note here that the power that the Satan wielded was God’s, and not his own, and it is so throughout the divine dealings; even Pharaoh was raised up for a purpose,—that God’s name and power might be declared throughout all the earth.

The adversary still clung to his position, saying, “Skin after skin. All that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth *thine hand* now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face.” So God smote Job with a loathsome disease, and in his extremity, his wife, in turn, became the Satan, by suggesting the course he desired—“Curse God and die.” Job’s beautiful reply rebuked her folly: “What, shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?” This reminds us of the secularist formula, “If we bless God for the good, shall we not also curse Him for the evil?” which sounds unassailable until it is remembered that we have thoroughly earned the evil, but can establish no title to the good.

At this crisis Job’s three friends appear upon the scene, and his physical misery is aggravated by their cruelly unsympathetic thrashings out of his case. At first they sat down with him in silence for seven days, at the end of which Job, in his extremity, “opened his mouth and cursed his day.” The third chapter of his book contains this lamentation, which may be epitomised in the single expression, “Oh that I had never been born.”

Chapters 4 to 31 inclusive, are occupied by the arguments and replies of Job and his friends. Broadly stated, the case stands thus: Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar contended more and more strenuously, throughout their successive speeches, that Job’s unexampled sufferings were the divine chastisement for his hidden iniquities that had at last found him out. Whereas Job, on the other hand, agonizingly refuted their insinuations, and maintained his integrity, sometimes even to the point of reflecting upon the righteousness and mercy of God, though, at other times, he most emphatically justified God in His dealings, and fervently hoped for resurrection to eternal life in “the latter day.”

We make a selection or two illustrative of the arguments and replies as they are recorded:—

ELIPHAZ.—*First Speech* (chaps. 4, 5,).—Eliphaz, acknowledging Job’s excellencies in certain degree, begins his reproofs by insinuations of iniquity. “Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?” (ch. 4:7); and later, he insinuates that Job neglected God (ch. 5:8), “I would seek unto God, and unto God I would commit my cause.” Just as though Job had not done so continually. After further haranguing him in this style, he urged him not to despise chastening (that is, for iniquity—ch. 5:17): “Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth, therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty”—a saying excellent in the abstract, but offensive when used as a rod to wrongfully thrash a righteous man.

JOB’S REPLY TO ELIPHAZ (chaps. 6. and 7.).—Job was so grieved with this unmerited criticism, and with his bodily anguish, that he wished God would destroy him. “Oh that it

would please God to destroy me, that He would let loose His hand upon me” (ch. 6:9). He could not submit to Eliphaz’ reproof. “Teach me,” said he, “and I will hold my tongue. Cause me to understand wherein I have erred” (ch. 6:24). He further declared that man’s evil day was limited, in that we must all face death at last, and, turning to God, as it were, he complained of the bitterness of his calamities, saying, “My soul chooseth strangling and death rather than my life” (5:15). And “Why, O thou preserver of men, hast thou set me up as a mark against thee?” He knew he was not wicked, and could not realize the object of such chastening.

BILDAD.—*First Speech* (ch. 8.).—He was blunter than Eliphaz, and reproaching Job for his reply, suggested that his children had sinned, and therefore perished. “If thy children have sinned, and he have cast them away for their transgression; if thou wouldest seek unto the Lord betimes, and make thy supplication to the Almighty; if thou wert pure and upright, surely now he would awake for thee. . . . Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man, neither will he help the evil doers.”

JOB’S REPLY TO BILDAD (ch. 9., 10.).—Job admitted the abstract truth of Bildad’s statements, though he repudiated his application of them. “How should man be just before God?” he asks (ch. 9:2). “If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me. If I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse. He entirely overthrew the logic of his friends by this emphatic statement: “The earth is given into the hand of the wicked. He covereth the faces of the judges thereof, if not, where, and who is he?” (verse 24). And then, on the basis of this self-evident truth, he asked “If I be wicked, why labour I in vain?” And then he bewailed the lack of a mediator between God and himself, who should fittingly and sympathetically plead his cause. “My soul is weary of my life,” said he, and “let me alone that I may die.”

ZOPHAR.—*First Speech* (ch. 11.).—He exceeds his predecessors in the vehemence of his attack on Job, whom he reproachfully styles a man “full of talk,” and “lies,” and even goes so far as to say “God exacteth of thee this that thine iniquity deserveth” (5:6). “If thou prepare thine heart, and stretch out thine hands towards Him, if iniquity be in thine hand put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles.”

JOB’S REPLY TO ZOPHAR (chaps. 12., 13., 14.).—Smarting under these odious imputations, Job became sarcastic: “No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you,” and he returned to his previously stated thesis, the undoubted prosperity of the wicked. “The tabernacles of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure. . . . With him is strength and wisdom, *the deceived and the deceiver are his*” (5:6, 16). He reproached all his three friends with the words, “Ye are forgers of lies; ye are all physicians of no value;” and declared that God would surely reprove them, if they secretly accepted persons. “Though he slay me,” said Job, “yet will I trust in him, but I will maintain mine own ways before him.” And then, turning to God, he said, “How many are mine iniquities and sins? Make me to know my transgression and my sin.” In this he was afterwards answered by the Almighty, and first humbled to the dust, and then exalted. The rest of his reply to Zophar in this place, is found in the well-known and pathetic passage in chap. 14. on the frailty of mortal life.

ELIPHAZ. — *Second Speech* (ch. 15.).—Becoming more emphatic in his reproaches, Eliphaz charges Job with uttering “vain knowledge,” and reasoning with “unprofitable talk.” “Yea,” says he to Job, “thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer before God.” And then he urges the age and experience of the friends as against Job’s comparative youth:—“With us are both the gray-headed and very aged men, much older than thy father” (5:10). Job would, perhaps, be seventy or eighty years old at this time.

JOB’S REPLY. — (chaps. 16.–17.). — “Miserable comforters are ye all,” said he. Were he in their place, he would strengthen the afflicted, and not torment him. He was smitten, stricken, and afflicted (5:10–11). “O that one might plead with God as a man pleadeth with his neighbour” (5:21); but there was not such an one, and Job lamented that his end had come (ch. 17:11).

BILDAD.—*Second Speech* (ch. 18.).—Like Eliphaz, he was angry because his construction of the matter was so decisively repudiated. “Wherefore are we counted as beasts and reputed vile in your sight?” He stuck to his conception of Job’s wickedness, and declared that “the light of the wicked shall be put out.”

JOB’S REPLY (ch. 19.).—Whatever the consequences, Job could not admit wickedness as construed by his friends. “God,” saith he, “hath overthrown me and compassed me with His net” (5:6). “He hath also kindled His wrath against me, and He *counteth me as one of His enemies*” (5:11). “Why persecute ye me as God?” And then he concluded with the well-known allusion to the resurrection, beginning with the words, “I know that my Redeemer liveth.”

ZOPHAR. — *Second Speech* (ch. 20.).—Following in the footsteps of the others, Zophar descanted on the short triumph and fearful end of the wicked, insinuating that this was what was coming on Job. In 5:10, the allusion to the wicked in the words “his hand shall restore their goods,” seems to indicate that, in his opinion, Job’s substance had been gotten by extortion—a view which finds even stronger expression in v. 19: “because he hath oppressed and hath forsaken the poor, because he hath violently taken away a house which he builded not.” Therefore, a dreadful end should come upon the wicked. We can imagine what sort of an affliction this was to a benevolent and righteous man.

JOB’S REPLY (ch. 21.).—Job returns to his previously-stated thesis concerning the prosperity of the wicked. “Listen,” says he, “and when I have spoken, mock on. Wherefore do the wicked live, become old—yea, are mighty in power?” (5:7). “There is no rod of God upon *them*” (5:9). Look, says he, at the common fate of the righteous and the wicked. They all die alike. Your interpretation of my case is an ignorant slander (5:27–28). “The wicked is RESERVED to the day of destruction; they shall be *brought forth to the day of wrath.*”

ELIPHAZ. — *Third Speech* (ch. 22.).—He now comes out straight and emphatic (5:5–10). “Is not thy wickedness great, and thine iniquities infinite? . . . *Therefore*, snares are round about thee, and sudden fear troubleth thee.” Then, with hypocritical exhortation, he

says (5:21): “Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace, thereby good shall come unto thee.”

JOB’S REPLY (chaps. 23., 24.).—Smarting under these unfounded and continuous accusations, Job groaned within himself that he could not find God, but he encouraged himself with the assurance of God’s omniscience and justice (5:10), “He knoweth the way that I take, when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.” The wicked, said he, often go unpunished. Yea, even those “*that rebel against the light*” (5:13), and all finally depart to *sheol* together.

BILDAD.—*Third Speech* (ch. 25.).—In few words, entirely beside the point, he urged that man could not be clean in the sight of God.

JOB’S REPLY TO BILDAD, AND HIS FINAL STATEMENT OF HIS INTEGRITY (chaps. 26.–31.).—How hast thou helped and counselled? asks Job. There is a resurrection (5:5–6), and some *will* be clean. God’s ways are mighty truly; but He “hath *taken away my judgment*” (27:2). I cannot justify you (5:5), “till I die I will not remove my integrity from me.” I am not a “hypocrite” (5:8). Oh, “where shall wisdom be found?” (28:12). God knoweth it (5:23), “and unto man he saith, Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding” (5:28).

Job looked back upon his former estate, in which God had blessed him with abundance and honour:—“Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me” (29:2). He rehearsed his righteousness and the respect in which he was held. “But now,” says he, “I am the song of the children of fools,” and God has “*become cruel to me*” (30:21). He closes with a fervent declaration of his integrity. He had not been deceived by women; he had not despised the cause of his servant; he had not made gold his hope; he had not turned aside to idolatry; he had not even rejoiced over the destruction of his adversaries. A man who could truthfully affirm these things of himself was indeed superexcellent. He wished that God would answer him (31:35), and that his adversary had written a book; he would easily answer, and joyfully triumph in his cause.

Presently God did answer, and Job was exalted indeed; but not before he was humbled still further.

ELIHU’S ARGUMENT AGAINST JOB, AND AGAINST HIS THREE FRIENDS; AND IN JUSTIFICATION OF GOD IN HIS CHASTENING OF THE RIGHTEOUS (chaps. 32.–37.).—Job ceased, and then there arose a young man, Elihu (God himself), son of Barachel (Blessed of God) the Buzite (descendant of Nahor, Abraham’s brother), of the kindred of Ram (Exalted). He was angry with Job “because he justified himself rather than God”; and with his three friends “because they had found no answer and yet had condemned Job” (32:2–3).

The most diametrically opposite opinions have been, and are, held concerning this man; some supposing him to be a presumptuous young man whose meddlings and reproaches are worse than the blunderings of the three friends, while others regard him in

the light of a truly wise mediator, whose justification of God's ways is immediately endorsed by the divine voice itself.

"It is now, however, generally agreed that Elihu does represent a different standpoint from the friends, and really provides a solution of the problem which they discuss. Whereas they supposed that punishment implied sin, and was proportionate to the sin, he regards it as necessary to perfection, and therefore most likely to overtake the relatively most perfect." (*Smith's Dict. Art. Job.*)

For "punishment" read "suffering," and this paragraph then expresses the truth.

Excusing his youth, and pleading the "inspiration of the Almighty" (32:6–8), Elihu first rebukes the friends, and then turns to Job. He offers himself as the desired mediator, a partaker of the same earthly nature (33:6). He convicts Job of a grave error in maintaining his righteousness at the expense of reflecting on God's justice and mercy; as when he says: "Behold he findeth occasions against me, he *counteth me for his enemy*" (5:10). He argues that "God is greater than man . . . and giveth not account of any of his matters"; that he chastens the most upright, to set him on high for ever at last. Elihu's words in this chapter concerning the "messenger," the "interpreter," "one among a thousand," who will "show to man God's righteousness," and who shall be delivered from the pit, are highly suggestive of Christ, in whom all these things are fulfilled.

Elihu paused for Job to answer, declaring that he desired to justify him (5:32). No answer being forthcoming from Job against this new construction of his case, Elihu proceeded in ch. 34. to paraphrase some of the arguments in which Job had erred. "Job hath said, 'I am righteous, and God hath taken my judgment'" (5:2; compare 27:2). "He hath said, 'It profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself in God'" (5:9). This was the logical outcome of some of his words, which, Elihu argued, really placed him in company with the wicked (5:7–8). "Far be it from God," said Elihu, "that he should do wickedness, and from the Almighty that he should commit iniquity" (5:10). No injustice could be imputed to God if he gathered to himself *his* Spirit and *his* breath, and destroyed all flesh together (5:14–15). He must not be questioned or criticised, far less condemned (5:18–19). He will put away many mighty men without consulting flesh and blood (5:24). Chastening should be endured patiently, even if not understood. In any case, there should not be the least reflection on God's justice and mercy. "Surely it is meet to be said unto God: I have borne (it), I will not offend. That which I see not, teach thou me; *if* I have done iniquity, I will do no more" (5:31–32). The omission of the italicised words in this place leaves the meaning more obvious (compare R. V.).

Continuing, Elihu declared that some of Job's sayings amounted to a declaration that his righteousness was more than God's (35:1). And, however severe such a construction may at first sight seem, it was one which God Himself put upon Job's case (40:8). Elihu argued that Job's righteousness might profit a *man* or his wickedness hurt him; but that neither one nor the other could materially affect God, who is the giver of all things to man (5:6–8). This reminds us of what Jesus himself says concerning the servants of God: "Doth (a man) thank (his) servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I

trow not. So likewise ye, *when ye shall have done all those things that were commanded you*, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have (but) done that which was our duty to do” (Luke 17:9–10).

But Elihu recognised (5:15) that these slips of Job’s were those of a righteous man in severe affliction, and therefore exhorted him (5:14) still to trust in God: “Judgment *is* before him, therefore *trust* thou in him.”

And then he goes on to speak more “on God’s behalf” (36:2–3), ascribing righteousness to Him as the first of all first principles. Though He afflict, yet God “despiseth not.” He “would have removed (Job) out of the strait” in due time (5:16), but to criticise and impute cruelty to God was a sin. “Desire not the night,” said Elihu, referring to Job’s cursing his day and wishing to die. “Take heed, regard not iniquity, for this hast thou chosen *rather than affliction*” (5:21). Suffer, and hope, and magnify God, who is so high above us that we can only see Him “afar off.” And he goes on with a beautiful reference to God’s mighty works, and concludes: “Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out: he is excellent in power and in judgment, *and in plenty of justice: he will not afflict*. Men do therefore fear him: he respecteth not any that are wise of heart.”

GOD ANSWERS JOB (chaps. 38.–41.). After Elihu, God himself abruptly “answered Job out of the whirlwind,” pleading His own cause (Psa. 74:22), sustaining Elihu’s vindication of the divine character, and convincing Job of “darkening counsel by words without knowledge,” or, as Job himself contritely put it, becoming “vile,” uttering things he understood not, that were too wonderful (Psa. 77:10) for him.

By a series of the most sublime challenges, this conviction was soon wrought in the mind of the humbled servant of God. Where was Job at the creation of the world? Who laid the measures of it by the hands of the rejoicing “sons of God”? Who appointed the sea his bounds? Who commanded the morning that the Dayspring should arise upon the earth and shake the wicked out of it? Could Job open the gates of death? Could he see the resurrection and judgment? Could he control the hail, the rain, and the stars in their orbits? Could he account for wisdom? Let him look at his fellow groundlings, goats and hinds, wild asses and oxen, peacock, stork and ostrich, horse, hawk, and eagle—who made them all?

“Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty, instruct? He that reproveth God let him answer it” (40:2).

Job was humbled to the dust (5:3 5) and God continued the challenge, which should be studied by everyone who is disposed to think himself something when he is nothing.

“Wilt thou also disannul my judgment? Wilt thou condemn me that thou mayest be righteous?” Let Job abase the proud and destroy the wicked; “Then,” said God, “will I also confess unto thee that *thine own right hand can save thee*” (5:14). Then follows, in conclusion, references to “behemoth” and “leviathan” and Job’s powerlessness in their presence (xli).

This completed his “perfecting.” Absolutely humbled he admitted his errors: “Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (42:6).

The Epilogue or Conclusion

(ch. 42:7–17).

Having been mentally and morally perfected, a sweet revenge was prepared of God for Job; and one which at the same time excluded boasting from all flesh concerned. His three friends were sent to him with sacrifice that he might pray for them, lest God should deal with them after their folly.

And they offered the sacrifice, and Job prayed. “And the Lord turned the captivity of Job *when he prayed for his friends*” (5:10). And he lived other 140 years and had double as much as in the old estate, to which, in his misery, he had desired to return.

Job and Jesus: a Comparison

Like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Joseph and Moses, David and Solomon, and many others, Job is a type of Christ. And since his book was “written for our learning,” and we belong, or desire to belong, to Christ, we trace the comparison with personal interest.

Job means Hated, Persecuted, and Job’s experience was in harmony with his name.—So Jesus was “despised and rejected of men,” and “abhorred” by his nation.

Job was “the greatest of the men of the East,” and greater still in his last estate.—Jesus, in the days of his flesh, was a greater than Job, even as he was a “greater than Solomon,” and at his second appearing will be the Prince of “the Kings of the East.”

Job sanctified and prayed for and offered for his sons.—Jesus did, and does, the like. He prayed for Peter, for those that the Father had given him, and for those who should afterwards believe on him through their word (John 16:20). He is a priest over God’s house, greater than Moses or Job, inasmuch as a Son is greater than a servant (Heb. 3:6).

Satan, who was merely “a hireling” himself, came among the sons of God to worship, and reproached Job with mercenary motives.—Satan, in the shape of the “hireling” priests and scribes, worshipped among the sons of God, and similarly reproached the Son of God himself. And even among his own disciples was “a devil” who sold him for thirty pieces of silver. The “body of Christ still exists,” the living contingent of the “sons of God” (1 John 3:2); also the Satan, who is not slow to impute mercenary motives where he can. We do not hear from Job what became of the Satan. But we get a hint from the Lord concerning the future (Rev. 3:9).

God gave Job into the Satan’s hand, with limitations as to his power for evil —So God gave Jesus into the hand of Satan; but with the final reservation “Spare his life”—that is to say, the sin-power was not allowed to hold him in death, for he was a Holy One.

Job received evil at the hands of the Lord.—So did Jesus, even unto death, saying, “the cup that my Father giveth me, shall I not drink it.”

Job in his deep affliction “cursed his day,” saying in effect: “I wish I had never been born.—So did NOT Jesus; but he discerned the time of his visitation:—“Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name (John 12:27).

Job was tormented at the hands of his friends.—So was Jesus, even to crucifixion, and when he comes again he will exhibit the wounds as “those with which he was wounded in the house of his friends” (Zech. 13.).

Job, though himself a mediator in a sense, yet longed for a mediator to come.—Jesus is he.

Job looked to the latter day to see the resurrection of the dead and his Redeemer standing upon the earth.—Jesus *is* “the Resurrection and the Life,” and looked, and looks, for the same day, when he will bring Job forth from *sheol*.

Job complained that God had “taken away his judgment”—The prophets said that Messiah should so suffer; and Jesus was “taken from prison and from judgment;” but complained not.

God turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends.—Jesus having prayed for his enemies: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;” God “turned his captivity,” so that “he ascended up on high, led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.” He has now a double portion of the Spirit, and is the “Heir of all things.” A new and happy family will yet gather round him, in which Job himself will figure. Let us “endure,” that we may be accounted worthy of a place therein.