

The Puzzles of Job

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Chapter Two

WHAT IS MAN?

Another great question raised by the Patriarch Job was this: "**What is man?**" Though Job was at times in despair (and who can blame him?); nevertheless, he caught glimpses of truths too wonderful for him to fully grasp. When he asked, "**What is man?**" it was not so much man himself that was in his view as why it was GOD paid so much attention to man. "**What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him? and that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him? And that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment? How long wilt thou not depart from me, nor let me alone till I swallow down my spittle** (for a breathing spell)? **I have sinned; what shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of men? why hast thou set me as a mark against thee, so that I am a burden to myself?**" (Job 7:17-20)

Job saw what we need to see, that man is a special creation of GOD. He magnifies man sometimes, sets His heart upon him, tests him, visits him, and preserves him. To say, as does the evolutionist, that man is a thinking animal, a creature left to the mercy of his needs, urges and drives, is never a satisfactory answer to the puzzle, "**What is man?**"

To say that man is a product of chance, change and environment and that through some miracle of evolution man became men, is equally unsatisfactory. A man may be deceived into accepting that idea when he is swollen with pride and wants all creation to think he is responsible to no one. But when he is all alone, when night has wrapped him in darkness, when his mind wanders out beyond the stars, he craves a better answer than that his ancestors were anteaters! His soul, though sold to the powers of darkness, is yet able to knock on the gates of Heaven and to long for the light that he knows he was created to share in. You get this man in a corner, put pressure on him, drive him until he reaches his wit's end, and he will look for help, not to an animal ancestry, but to GOD! You see,

Man is more than iron dug from central gloom,
And heated hot with burning fears,
And dipt in baths of hissing tears,
And battered with the shocks of doom.

Man is a creature that can leap into the arms of GOD, for he bears GOD's image. We were made to love GOD, and we are never quite all we should be until we do love Him.

We are conscious of the fact, as was the Psalmist, that we are fearfully and wonderfully made; that we are more than bone, muscle, skin, hair and blood. To observe our bodies at work, one might be tempted to say that man consists of a ceaseless motion of chemical substances - and that is all some persons see. But deep down in our hearts none of us are persuaded that this is the total man!

We can say a number of things. We say he is the animal that laughs, and that he laughs and builds houses and worries. Or, as some have said, "Man is that being who is always in a hurry so that he may have some time saved up to waste!" But man is more than meets the eye. When we look at a man, we do not see all that there is to him. To say that man is just what we see, is to face the frustration of the old philosopher who dreamed that he was a beautiful butterfly. Then he worried because he was not sure if he was a man dreaming that he was a butterfly, or if he really was a butterfly dreaming that he was a man!

The problem is not, as we noted at the beginning, "**What is man?**" This is not as hard to answer as we sometimes think it is. The thing that stimulated Job's wonder was, "**What is man that thou (God) shouldst magnify him?**" Why should GOD bother about a man in any case? Why did GOD consider Job and test him and preserve him? Why did GOD not merely let him die?

The answer to this was beginning to break like an eternal light on the mind of Job. Man was more than so many pounds of flesh! Job realized that man was more than a changeful and fitful flame, kindled and then put out like a light in the night. Man had a relationship to GOD. GOD had set His heart upon him. So Job's question was, "Why should this be so?"

To be loved is the greatest thing that can happen to a man on earth. It has been said, and I believe it, that a man cannot live without love. Then to think that GOD loves us and has set His heart upon us, that is cause for wonder indeed! This was an exciting revelation to Job. It is to anyone and everyone who can and will grasp it.

David looked into the heavens, and the wonders of man's relationship with GOD set him so aflame that he sang: "**When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!**" (Psalm 8:3-9).

Man is a creature of life, but it is life such as no other on earth. It is not something that can be seen in a microscope. The surgeon's knife can never dissect it, and no biologist can ever find it. It is God-breathed life, for it was into the body of Adam that GOD breathed, and man became a living soul.

Man, then, is GOD's special creation. GOD set His heart upon him. This should be welcome relief to those who have been in trouble and despair, who have known weakness and frustration. All is not lost. Matters are not out of the hands of GOD. There is no need to give way to fear, nor let the darkness swallow us up. GOD has set His heart upon us!

The puzzle, "**What is man?**" is really no puzzle at all - or if it is, it is a puzzle of our own making. It can be solved the very instant that we acknowledge that man is the direct creation of GOD.

There is a stamp upon man that no other earthly creature bears. Man can be many things. He can be mighty, mischievous, cruel, foolish, angry, strong, weak, brutish, wicked, happy, sad, evil, violent, vain, wise, prudent, slothful, thrifty, diligent, angry or docile. He can be more. He can pray with some inexplicable sense of an unseen presence, and he can praise, sing, worship and believe! GOD made him so.

GOD magnified man and set His heart upon him. That is why man should not live by bread alone, which would be enough were man composed only of a body. But he is to live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of GOD. Unless man does so, he will not live as he should. He will be living below the will of GOD and will miss out on the blessings GOD intended for him.

What then is man? He is the special creation, the king of all GOD's creatures! Man is a creature of GOD's love. Man's creation was not the result of a hasty decision by GOD. Man was the product of the will and the love of GOD. GOD made him to love Him and made him so that man could love GOD. This is expressed in the Song of Solomon in these words: "**He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love**" (2:4). Part of the wonder of GOD's love is revealed in the fact that He loved us before He created us. In his letter of encouragement to the Ephesian church Paul said, "**Blessed by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love**" (1:3-4).

GOD has not turned His heart away from us now. He still loves us. "**In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another**" (I John 4:9-11). A propitiation is an atoning sacrifice.

In addition to this we have assurance from the LORD through Paul that He will always love us: "**Whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son; but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine,**

or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:30-39).

GOD loved man and showed it by watching over him. This is sufficiently illustrated for us by the fact that Noah and his family were saved from the judgment of the flood and were preserved to replenish the earth following the flood. Abraham was called from the darkness and idolatry of a heathen land and placed in the land of promise. When the enemies of GOD sought to destroy Daniel in the lion's den, GOD intervened. And what clearer illustration of the love of GOD is there than Israel scattered among the nations and yet preserved and once again taking a part among the family of nations.

Not only did GOD love man and watch over him, but He provided the price of redemption for him when he sinned.

All the sacrifices and types of the Old Testament were pictures teaching that CHRIST would come and be the world's Redeemer. It was in CHRIST that the full price of man's redemption was met: **"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Ephesians 1:7). "But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come . . . by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Hebrews 9:11-12).**

This confronts us with a new slant to the puzzle of Job when he asked, **"What is man"** The question to be answered now is, "Why does man go his own way when GOD has provided all he needs for salvation, peace, joy, and a future of bliss? Pope, in his essay on man, said it well:

Oh sons of earth! Attempt ye still to rise,
By mountains piled on mountains, to the skies?
Heaven still with laughter the vain toil surveys,
And buries madmen in the heaps they raise.

The way to GOD is found, fashioned and fixed. There is no other! GOD made us, loves us, redeemed us through His SON, and now gives the invitation to all: Whosoever will, let him come unto me and live.

We cannot put one little star in motion,
We cannot shape one single forest leaf,
We cannot fling a mountain up, nor sink an ocean,
Presumptuous pigmy, large with unbelief!

We cannot bring one dawn of regal splendor,
Nor bid the day to shadowy twilight fall,

Nor send the pale moon forth with radiance tender;
And dare we doubt the One who has done all?

- S.A. Nagel.

"He that cometh to GOD must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6).

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