

The Puzzles of Job

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Chapter Six

IF A MAN DIE WILL HE LIVE AGAIN?

The question of what follows death has occupied the minds of men as far back as we can trace history. The arguments and discussions surrounding this theme have often given off more heat than light. This is a theme concerning which men have written many books, but unaided human reason and experience have no answer.

Some persons have sought in many different ways to go behind the curtain that comes down at death to see what transpires, but it is all in vain. One man said to another as they viewed the body of a friend, "I wish I could talk with him now, for if he knows anything about what follows death, he knows more than we do."

A device that has been resorted to from time to time, one that goes back into the mists of antiquity, is that of seeking to contact the dead. Isaiah the prophet warned Israel in his day against this practice: "**And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them**" (Isaiah 8:19, 20).

Spiritism was widely practiced in the days of King Saul of Israel. He attempted to stamp out the practice but did not quite succeed. Then there came a moment in his own life when he wanted to communicate with Samuel who had been dead for some time, Saul sought out a sorceress living at Endor for this evil purpose (I Samuel 28).

Manasseh was the King of Judah, notorious for his use of enchantments, sorceries, divinations, and dealing with a familiar spirit (II Chronicles 33:6). A familiar spirit was in reality a demon that would come readily at the call of the one possessed by it. Divination was the supposed art of gaining secret knowledge especially concerning the future. A ruler such as Manasseh who endorsed such practices gave protection and prestige to those evil persons in his kingdom who sought to communicate with the Devil and to look into the future.

The fact that men have tried by various means to see into the future, to tell what lies beyond our

common sphere of knowledge is strong evidence of man's curiosity and even deep concern with the question: **"If a man die, shall he live again?"** (Job 14:14).

This is a matter that often haunts parents when death has visited the home. I have had fathers and mothers heartbroken over the loss of a child, say to me: "Pastor, what is the condition of my child now? Will I ever see him again? Will I know him if I do see him?" These are questions that arise out of the central question Job asked.

Apparently Job began to compare the lot of man with that of some things he saw in nature. He considered man's life to be but of few days and full of trouble. He comes forth like a flower and is cut down. He flees as a shadow and does not continue to live. **"Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not"** (Job 14:1, 2).

Then Job considered what happened to trees. He said, **"For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground; Yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant. But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up: So man lieth down, and riseth not"** (Job 14:7-12a).

Job was simply asking if man was not better than a tree? Perhaps we would never think of making such a comparison, but he did. In the New Testament our LORD made it plain that one man is worth more than the whole material world so far as GOD is concerned.

Do not think for a moment that Job was ignorant of the answer to this question. He was replying to Zophar's accusations that he, Job, was a sinner or else he would be serene, restful, safe and would be able to lie down and not be afraid. Job's answer was that if he sinned he would someday have to answer for his sin, he was not trying to hide anything. He argued, however, that a man is better than a tree. If a tree is cut down and will live again, surely a man who dies will also live again. In fact, in verse 14, where Job raises the question: **"If a man die, shall he live again?"** he also answers the question by saying, **"All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee; thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands."**

In the chapters following this, Job shows that he has faith in another life following this short earthly experience. And his expressions concerning it show it is to him something very real and sublime. For example, Bildad severely scolds Job saying, **"How long will it be ere you make an end of words? mark, and afterwards we will speak"** (Job 18:2). In present-day language Bildad said to Job that he talked nonsense, he talked too much; if he would be quiet long enough, the others would be able to tell him something. Then Bildad subtly insinuated that Job was a wicked man and that because he was wicked he had terrors and had lost his children - his roots had dried up and his branches had been cut off, his name would be forgotten among men (verses 16, 17).

Job had an answer to this scathing attack upon him. He admitted that there were things that

perplexed him. He said, **"I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard: I cry aloud, but there is no judgment"** (Job 19:7). **"He hath stripped me of my glory, and taken the crown from my head. He hath destroyed me on every side, and I am gone: and mine hope hath he removed like a tree"** (Job 19:9, 10). **"He hath put my brethren far from me, and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me. My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me. They that dwell in mine house, and my maids, count me for a stranger; I am an alien in their sight. I called my servant, and he gave me no answer; I intreated him with my mouth. My breath is strange to my wife, though I intreated for the children's sake of mine own body. Yea, young children despised me; I arose, and they spake against me. All my inward friends abhorred me: and they whom I loved are turned against me. My bone cleaveth to my skin and to my flesh, and I am escaped with the skin of my teeth"** (Job 19:13-20).

How would we answer in such a situation? If it seemed that GOD did not hear us and that everything was going wrong, what would be our reaction? Suppose we were stripped of all our material goods and our friends left us and our loved ones turned against us and we were broken in health - what would we think or say?

Job remembered two things that kept his life in balance under these difficult circumstances. He remembered that His redeemer was a living redeemer and that he, Job, would live again. Here are his words, **"For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me"** (Job 19:25-27).

In this Job anticipated Peter who wrote: **"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls"** (I Peter 1:3-9).

Job is also a kinsman of Paul in the faith, and in his hope of the resurrection gives us a foretaste of I Corinthians 15 where Paul wrote: **"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive . . . The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death . . . In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed . . . Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord"** (22, 26, 52, 58).

It is not all of life to live nor is it all of death to die. The Bible says that it is appointed unto men once to die, but after that there is judgment.

Our Saviour said in John 5: "**Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation**" (28, 29). And centuries before these words were spoken, Isaiah said, "**Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead**" (Isaiah 26:19).

It was concerning judgment and resurrection that Paul ended his discourse on Mars Hill. "**Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance to all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead**" (Acts 17:31).

So it is no mystery that dead men shall live! They will live and think and feel and rejoice and weep. Many of them will stand ashamed before the bar of GOD's justice. They will confess their crimes to GOD with nothing held back. They will live to give an eye-witness account to every evil deed and every vile act they ever committed.

Is it any wonder that some hope the dead will not live again? But they will. We all will. Before GOD the truth will come out; all that the sinner ever thought was hidden will be known.

- All the rebellion of his heart that his fellowman might have considered cleverness of his part.
- All the ill-will of that day called strength of character.
- All the sin that was named self-expression.
- All the anger that was called righteous indignation
- all of it shall stand condemned for what it actually was.

Do we realize that in that day when men stand to be judged before GOD there will no longer be any unsolved robberies, nor more unsolved murders? Everything will be known. The filthy talk, the life of adultery, covetousness, deceit, spite, yes every evil thing will be confessed by those guilty of such things. The very words of the unrighteous will condemn them. Daniel's words are arresting and full of dread for those involved where he said, "**Many . . . shall awake . . . to shame and everlasting contempt**" (Daniel 12:2). How exposure of any fault leaves us embarrassed now. There is no telling to what length some of us will go to protect our name and our pride. But in that day, none of our self-protective devices will avail.

But then there is another side to this picture. Some will live again to be like JESUS (I John 3:1). They will come into the full release of the pardon they accepted when CHRIST was made LORD of their lives. The glory of their eternity will be marked by the removal of the curse. They will see the face of GOD and His name shall be in their foreheads. They will live in everlasting light and reign with CHRIST forever and ever (Revelation 21-22).

When death strikes at those who belong to the LORD we should remember with new insight and assurance His words: "**I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live**" (John 11:25).

There are three possible ways to die, and the way we die determines how we shall live.

First of all we may die with CHRIST. This is the truth of Romans 6:6-11 where identification with CHRIST and His death and resurrection is the result of our placing our trust in Him as personal SAVIOUR. It is this that opens to us all the treasures of salvation provided by GOD.

There is also death in CHRIST. It was this great truth that Paul used to bring comfort to the Thessalonian believers who wondered what would happen to their loved ones who had died and CHRIST had not returned. Paul showed them and also us how that those who die in CHRIST will be brought back with Him when He returns and will be given resurrection bodies. Those who belong to CHRIST and are alive at His coming will be caught up together with those who have died in CHRIST and will meet the LORD in the air and ever be with Him (I Thessalonians 4:13-18).

The third possibility, and this is one that GOD would have all men avoid, is dying without CHRIST. The consequences of this are brought before us in Revelation 20:11-15 where the most solemn court scene in history will take place when the dead, small and great, stand before GOD and answer to Him for their rejection of JESUS CHRIST as SAVIOUR and LORD.

"Oh the way sometimes is low,
And the waters dark and deep,
And stumble as I go;
But I have a tryst to keep,
It was plighted long ago
With some who lie asleep.
And the days go dragging slow,
And the sad hours gravewards creep,
And the world is hushed in woe
I neither wail nor weep,
For the LORD would not have it so,
I have a tryst to keep."

~ end of chapter 6 ~

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