

Beauties of the Truth

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Thought to be Harmonious with God's Plan of the Ages
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Abraham and Melchizedek

Abraham's faith is well known. We remember him for his prompt obedience to leave his own country and go to a land God would show him. We remember the promise made upon his father's death for the blessing of all the families of the earth. God honored him for his faith and readiness to sacrifice his only son.

The perception of these men of faith like Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph is often that of a primitive nomadic tribal people who had little touch with the universal issues of the past or future. However, just the opposite is the case. They were men of the greatest stature, with superior wisdom. Some had skill in engineering, astronomy, mathematics, the natural sciences or generalship and all had a focus on family heritage and customs of Godliness. They have no rivals in contemporary depraved humanity.

One must look between the lines of the brief Biblical accounts to discover the great principles of those times. After the flood the lives of the patriarchs diminished only gradually. Noah lived to 950. Shem lived to 600 years, just one tenth of human labor under sin. Even Abraham's father lived more than 200 years. The tribal families began to spread throughout Mesopotamia and mark out their territories. With the Nimrod rebellion, the concept of cities was formed to protect differing cultures and wealth. Rivalry, pride and greed led to alliances and rule over regions and peoples.

One such account is found in Genesis 14. It is a deceptively simple account that hides a profound lesson that has not yet seen its fulfillment. The first nine verses are an account of the first war ever recorded in scripture, which we would not have if the history of Abram and Lot had not been concerned in it. The invaders were four kings, two of them no less than kings of Shinar and Elam (that is, Chaldea and Persia). The invaded were the kings of five cities that lay near together in the plain of Jordan, namely Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Zoar.

The occasion of this war was the revolt of the five kings from under the rule of Chedorlaomer. Twelve years they served him. The Sodomites were the posterity of Canaan whom Noah had pronounced a servant to Shem. That prophecy was soon to be enforced. In the thirteenth year, beginning to be weary of their subjection, they rebelled, denied their tribute, and attempted to shake off the yoke and retrieve their liberties. In the fourteenth year, after some pause and preparation, Chedorlaomer with his allies set themselves to chastise and reduce the rebels and to fetch his tribute from them on the point of his sword. The four kings laid the neighboring countries waste and enriched themselves with the spoil of the five cities including Sodom and Gomorrah.

Continuing with Genesis 14:10-12 we find: (1) The forces of the king of Sodom and his allies were routed, and many of them who had escaped the sword now perished in the bitumen slime-pits. (2) The cities were plundered. All the goods of Sodom, and particularly their stores and provisions, were carried off by the conquerors. (3) Lot was carried captive. They took Lot among the rest, and his goods.

Here we consider Lot as sharing with his neighbors in this common calamity. Though he was himself a righteous man, and Abram's brother's son, yet he was involved with the rest in all this trouble. He was smarting for the foolish choice he made of a settlement here. This is indicated when it is said, "they took Lot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom." So near a relation of Abram should have been a companion and disciple of Abram, and should have abode near his tents. But if he chose to dwell in Sodom, he must thank himself for sharing in Sodom's calamities. Particular mention is made of their taking Lot's goods, those goods which had occasioned his contest with Abram and his separation from him.

In Genesis 14:13-16 we have recorded the only account of a military action Abram was engaged in, and this he was aroused to, not by his ambition, but purely by a principle of charity. It was not to enrich himself, but to rescue his nephew. No military expedition was undertaken, prosecuted, and finished, more honorably than this of Abram.

He is here called "Abram the Hebrew," that is, the son and follower of Heber or Eber, the great grandson of Shem. This may be a reference to Eber's faith in a degenerating society. Abram acted like a Hebrew - in a manner worthy of the name and character of a religious teacher. This is the first occurrence of the title "Hebrew" in Scripture. The name later came to mean "one from beyond," either those beyond the Euphrates River or those stateless semi-nomads. That was the condition of Abram, one without a country, but by faith he waited for the promise.

He received news of his kinsman's distress. The tidings were brought by one who escaped with his life. He was likely a Sodomite, and as such deserved no special recognition. Yet knowing Abram's relation to Lot and concern for him, he appealed for Abram's help.

Now Abram prepared for the expedition. The cause was plainly good. His call to engage in it was clear. Therefore he "armed his trained servants," born in his house, to the number of 318 - a great family, but a small army, about as many as Gideon's that routed the Midianites (Judges 7:7). He drew on his trained servants, not only instructed in the art of war, but led in the principles of faith. For Abram commanded his household to "keep the way of the Lord" (Genesis 18:19). This shows that Abram was a great man, who had many servants depending upon him, which was not only his strength and honor, but gave him great opportunity for doing good. He was a man who not only served God himself, but instructed all about him in the service of God. As a wise man, and a man of peace, yet he disciplined his servants for war, not knowing on what occasion he might need them.

He prevailed with his neighbors Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre to go along with him. It was his prudence to strengthen his own troops with their auxiliary forces. Probably they saw themselves concerned to cooperate against an imposing power, lest their own turn as subjects should be next.

His courage and conduct were remarkable. What could one family of husbandmen and shepherds do against the armies of four princes, who now came fresh from blood and victory? It was not a vanquished, but a victorious army. "The righteous is bold as a lion." Abram was no stranger to the stratagems of war. He "divided himself," as Gideon did his little army (judges 7:16), that he might come upon the enemy from several quarters at once, and so make his few seem like a great many. He made his attack by night, that he might surprise them. His success was remarkable.

He defeated his enemies, and rescued his family. We do not find that he sustained any loss.

He rescued his kinsman, Lot. Twice here he is called "his brother." The relation between them made him disregard their former dispute, in which Lot acted poorly toward Abram. Abram might have justly upbraided Lot for his folly in quarreling with him and removing from him and tell him that he was well enough served. He might have regarded Lot's plight as properly serving his folly. But Abram takes this opportunity to be magnanimous, to give a proof of his sincerity and reconciliation. "A brother is born for adversity" (Proverbs 17:17).

Abram also rescued the rest of the captives, for Lot's sake, though they were strangers to him and as such he was under no obligation to them. They were Sodomites, and though he might have recovered Lot alone by a ransom, yet he brought back all the women, and the people, and their goods. As we have opportunity, we must "do good to all men." Abram's victory over the kings finds a parallel in the language of Isaiah concerning Cyrus centuries later. Isaiah 41:2, "[The Lord] raised up the righteous man from the east, and made him rule over kings."

The section of Genesis 14:17-20 begins with the mention of respect from the king of Sodom for Abram at his return from the conquest of the kings. But first is the story of Melchizedek. Who was he? He was "king of Salem" and "priest of the most high God," who went forth to meet Abram on his return from the pursuit of Chedorlaomer and his allies, who had carried Lot away captive. The meeting is described as having occurred in the "valley of Shaveh, which is the king's valley." This is the valley east of Jerusalem through which the Kidron flows, noted in 2 Samuel 18:18. He brought refreshment of bread and wine for the fatigued warriors. After this encounter, he disappears from the sacred writings for a thousand years.

Most expositors regard Melchizedek as a royal title rather than a personal name. This is because in the Hebrew it is always written as two separate hyphenated words: Melchi = King, Zedek = Righteousness or Zadok = Justice.

Recorded in several Qumran fragments (i.e., 11QMelch) and most rabbinical writers concur that Melchizedek was Shem the son of Noah, who was king and priest to those that descended from him. Shem was still living at this moment of history. He may have indeed been the only living patriarch who came from the old world before the flood. Being the oldest living forefather of Abram, there can be little doubt of the bonds of blood and honor that existed between these two noble men.

He was King of Salem, an acknowledged primal name for Jerusalem noted in Psalm 76:2. His domain marked the earliest claim to these sacred regions, long before the Jebusites occupied it, who were in turn evicted by King David. So God established a Semitic king here with a priority over all other religious and ethnic claims to follow.



Father Abraham

Melchizedek combined the offices of priest and king. He appeared to Abram as a righteous king who gave peace. He "brought forth bread and wine" for the refreshment of Abram and his soldiers, and in congratulation of their victory. This he did as a king, to honor a victor from the battle. As priest of the most high God he bestowed divine blessing upon Abram. Only a priest could convey God's blessing and then return the praise to the Almighty.

What did he say? Two things were said by him: (1) He blessed Abram from God: "Blessed be Abram, blessed of the most high God." Observe the titles he gives to God, which are very glorious. "The most high God" speaks of his absolute perfection, his sovereign dominion over all creatures. He is King of kings. As "Possessor of heaven and earth" he is the rightful owner and sovereign Lord of all creatures, because he made them. This speaks of him as the great God, and greatly to be praised (Psalm 24:1). (2) Melchizedek blessed God for Abram, "blessed be the most high God." God, as the most high, must have the glory of all our victories. In us he shows himself higher than our enemies (Exodus 18:11), for without him we could do nothing. This is the first record of God intervening to deliver a victory.

What was done for Melchizedek? Abram "gave him tithes of all." This may be looked upon as an offering vowed and dedicated to the most high God, and therefore put into the hands of Melchizedek his priest. Here is another first. The precedent of the tithe was established long before the Mosaic law and the Levitical priesthood. At this first record of the tithe, God may be marking Shem's life of 600 years which would be just one tenth of 6000 years of human history. So we should honor those who honor God and those he sanctifies in this drama of humanity.

We note another feature. Paul, in Hebrews 7:4, says the tenth was of the spoils. If Melchizedek was indeed Shem and if Sodom was indeed from the line of Ham and Canaan, as is acknowledged by Jewish sources, then there is a profound lesson here.

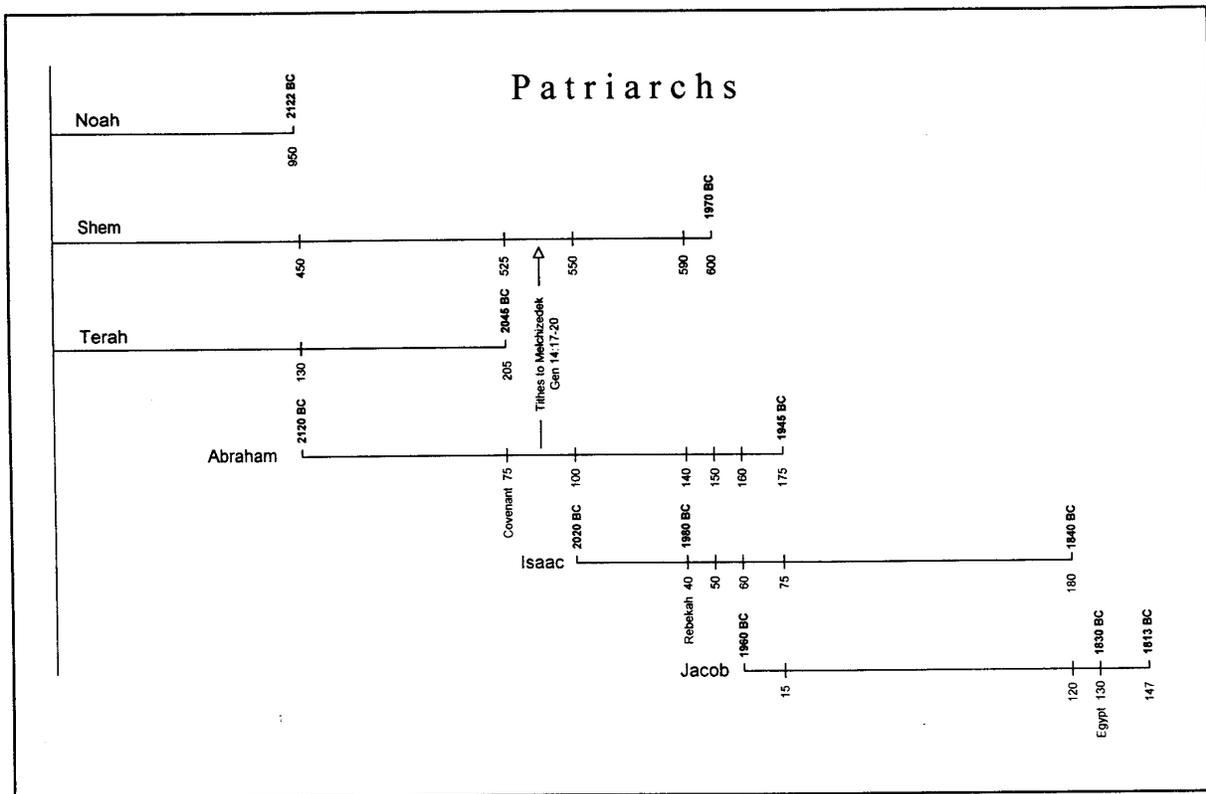
We recall the judgment for Ham's disrespect for his father, Noah. The sons had already been blessed (Genesis 9:1). So the sentence fell upon his son, Canaan. "Blessed be the Lord God of Shem and Canaan shall be his servant" (Genesis 9:26-27). This indicates that the family of Canaan owed the tithe of honor to Shem. But here Sodom rebelled and refused to give tribute. They were in turn overrun by Chedorlaomer, king of Elam. Elam was another son of Shem, however not of the Arphaxad line to Abram. In this peculiar coup, it appears that God forced the tithe from the line of Canaan be given to the line of Shem. Furthermore, while the line of Elam was allowed to compel the servitude, God honored another priority. Because Abram recovered the property and paid homage to Shem, as the "King of Righteousness," God blessed Abram's lineage through Arphaxad over the other sons of Shem.

Now we conclude the narrative of Genesis 14:21-24. We have here an account of what passed between Abram and the king of Sodom, who succeeded the one that fell in battle (verse 10). This king thought himself obliged to honor Abram, in return for the good services rendered for him. He said, "Give me the souls, and you take the substance." He pleads for the persons, but as freely bestows the goods on Abram. The king of Sodom had an original possession of both the persons and the goods. But in one sense, Abram's rescue mission acquired a right to supersede his domain. So to prevent all question, the king of Sodom made this fair proposal. Give back the people. You keep the wealth.

Nevertheless, Abram refused this generous offer. He not only resigned the persons to Sodom's king, who being delivered out of the hand of their enemies, ought to have served Abram. But he restored all the goods too, except for the tithe rendered to Melchizedek. Even Lot returned to Sodom. Abram would not take from a thread to a shoelace, not the least thing that ever belonged to the king of Sodom or any of his. A lively faith enables a man to look upon the wealth of rebels and villains in this world with a holy contempt. What are all the ornaments and delights of sense to one that has God and heaven ever in his eye?

Abram ratified this resolution with a solemn oath: "I have lifted up my hand to the Lord that I will not take any thing." Observe here the titles he gave to God, "The most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth." This is the same expression Melchizedek had just used. His conduct is measured by his benefactor and mentor. We do well to emulate our teachers (2 Timothy 3:14).

This ceremony to "lift up my hand unto the Lord" is first an acknowledgment of God's sovereignty and absolute truth in our lives. Second, it indicates our vows of allegiance to him alone. So in spiritual matters, swearing falsely has serious consequences. Abram likely vowed before he went to the battle that, if God would give him success, he would deny himself and his own right of taking anything of the spoils.



Abram backed his refusal with a good reason: "Lest thou should say, I have made Abram rich," which would reflect reproach. Abram now confirmed his refusal with this oath, to prevent any future impugning of his motives. The issue was clear. He had just accepted the promise and covenant of God in the 12th chapter. He was not about to presume against God now by taking to himself the spoils of this earth by his own hand. It was upon the promise and covenant of God that he would depend without the spoils of Sodom. He would not give a promise to the king of Sodom to say that he had enriched Abram.

He finally limits his refusal with a double proviso: (1) The food of his soldiers: they were worthy of their meat while they trod out the corn. (2) A share for his allies and confederates: "Let them take their portion." Those who are strict in restraining their own liberty ought not to impose restraints upon the liberties of others, nor to judge of them accordingly. We must not make ourselves the standard to measure others. There was no reason why Aner, Eshcol and Mamre should deny their right as Abram should deny his. They did not make the profession that he made, nor were they under the obligation of a vow. They had no covenant prospects as did Abram. By all means, "let them take their portion."

Now here is an interesting detail. In the 12th chapter God gave Abram the terms of the covenant to leave his own country and go to a land he would show him. Then he gave him the nature of the promise. Now here in the 14th chapter, upon entering the land, Abram demonstrates this great fidelity to his forefathers and benevolence in rescuing Lot. Next, in the 15th chapter, Abram takes five animals and divides this sacrifice in two parts. As the sun went down God's acceptance was shown in "a smoking furnace and a burning flame that passed between the pieces." Only then in Genesis 15:18 it is said: "In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram."

We notice that there were three conditions for the covenant in chapter 12. (1) To leave his country, (2) to leave his kindred, and (3) to leave his father's house. A similar call comes to Abram's seed to separate themselves from all associations that would obstruct their faith. Abram left his country, Ur of the Chaldees, with all its status and earthly prestige. He left his father's house, with the protection, customs and traditions of family when he departed from Haran at Terah's death. But only in the 14th chapter does he demonstrate a final separation from his kindred. Lot's loyalties are then fully separated from Abram's loyalties. He chose the family of God over the riches of his natural family. Abram yielded all honor to Melchizedek and laid the foundation for God to accept his sacrifice and confirm the covenant.

Now among all the Hebrew scriptures, only a Psalm of David picks up the name of Melchizedek in this shred of ancient history (Psalm 110:1-5). David's forecast of Messiah adds the subtle phrase that the order of Melchizedek is "forever," or as the Hebrew indicates *Owlam*: "time immemorial," from antiquity to eternity, a perpetual priesthood.

The Apostle Paul engages this noble theme in Hebrews chapters 5, 6 and 7. Paul's great treatise is addressed to Jews familiar with the Holy Scriptures and those who trusted in the Levitical or Aaronic priesthood. His point is that the divine arrangement recognizes only the Aaronic and Melchizedek priests. There may have been an unrecorded challenge to Jesus qualifying as a priest because he was not of the Levitical family but of Judah.

Paul develops his reasoning that the Melchizedek priesthood preceded and was superior to that of Levi. He also shows that this priesthood was distinctly different. He first reminds them that the Levitical priests were appointed for sacrifice for sins, but not Melchizedek. Then he appeals to David's Psalm which declares that Messiah would be of the Melchizedek priesthood. The reason for this is that it combined the office of King and Priest. Furthermore, this was a blessing priesthood and not a sacrificing priesthood (Hebrews 7:12-17, 24-25).

In Hebrews 6:20 Paul also picks up on the single word "forever" in Psalms. "Jesus, made a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." He explains in 7:3 that he was "without father, mother, without descent, neither having beginning of days, nor end of life." This has led to some speculations that Melchizedek, Enoch and others never died.

Melchizedek's genealogy was not in the records of the Gentiles. The creation tablets and the Genesis records were carried into the new world by Noah. Then new family records were formed among the various nations. Shem would not be recorded in those birth and death records of other nations originating after the flood. For those living in Abraham's day, the account of this King Melchizedek's mother or father would be recorded in none of those books, but might be known only to those of Shem's direct lineage who kept those earliest sacred accounts. Later these would be conveyed to Moses. Even the early Babylonian cuneiform Epic of Gilgamesh records Noah as "the immortal one" because they had not the records of his lineage.

However, the point Paul makes is that Melchizedek did not claim the throne because of ancestors or genealogy. He owed it to God's own appointment. And of course the title had no predecessor either. Just so, Jesus did not become Messiah because of human genealogy or inheritance, nor even from the tribe of Levi, but by divine appointment. Furthermore, his priesthood is perpetual and will extend to the Messianic age of blessing all the families of the earth.

Now Paul develops the point in Hebrews 7:4-10 that the Levitical priesthood is subservient to that of Melchizedek and will be replaced. As Melchizedek was superior to Abram, so Christ is superior to Aaron. He shows this in that not only father Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek, but also all the Levites in Abraham's loins, who were accustomed to receiving tithes, were really themselves paying tithes to Melchizedek. Because they considered themselves children of Abraham, they must recognize the greater priesthood which Abraham tithed.

In addition he directs their attention to the role of sacrificing Levitical priests for the sins of the people. This must be followed with the results of the sacrifice, from a blessing priesthood. This will be the work of the Millennial Melchizedek priesthood, of which Jesus is now the head. Even Aaron, when finishing his work of sacrificing, must change to glory garments in order to bless the people. Just so, this royal priesthood will no longer wear the robes of sacrifice but of glory and honor. Theirs will be the honor of dispensing the blessed results of the age of sacrifice.

The work of the Jewish Age was to take out a typical people, Israel after the flesh. The work of the Gospel Age has been to gather the Elect, "a people for his name," as antitypical priests like Aaron, to finish the work of sacrifice. The future work of the Melchizedek priests is to dispense the blessings to all the families of the earth, conferred through the Abrahamic promise, through the New Covenant. This will be the "good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people." Even now the Melchizedek head is in power and glory. During this overlapping of the ages, many body members are already joined with him, while those who are "alive and remain" are finishing the sacrificing work of the Aaronic priesthood.

But Paul was not the only one who caught this noble theme of a reigning priesthood. So did Peter in 1 Peter 2:5. "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people." This could not be said of the Levitical priesthood.

John also recognized this unique appointment in writing Revelation 1:6, "[Jesus Christ] hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." Then in Revelation 5:10 he writes: "Thou hast made them into a kingdom and priests for our God, and they will reign over the earth." (Fenton)

These will be those spoken of by the prophet, Isaiah 32:1, "Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness and princes shall rule in judgment." And also Isaiah 9:6-7, "The government shall be upon his shoulder and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."

Then the story of Abraham and Melchizedek will be complete.

-Jerry Leslie

The Book of Job

The following article is the last portion of a comprehensive treatise on the Book of Job, available electronically, as a Word file, from the author, at cahcbs@aol.com. Here we begin with Elihu's Response to Job.

ELIHU'S PREFACE - CHAPTER 33:1-22

Although he plans to criticize Job, Elihu is almost apologetic in approaching him. Before addressing the main problem, he makes clear to Job that he is coming as with constructive criticism and not to tear down. An analysis of this preface reveals seven rules to offering a rebuke or reproof to another.

Sincerity - "É speak from the uprightness of my heart" (Job 33:3). He thus seeks to set himself apart from the passions and prejudices of the other three.

Willingness to see the other side - "If thou canst answer me, set thine words in order, stand up" (verse 5). Be willing to realize that there are two sides to any disagreement. Be willing for the listener to "stand up" in his own defense.

Do not intrude where not wanted - "É am according to thy wish in God's stead" (verse 6). As Peter says of the Christian, he should not be "a busybody in other men's matters" (1 Peter 4:15).

Do not speak down to another - "É also am formed out of the clay" (verse 6). A true friend walks with the other as his equal, not as one that asserts his superiority.

Be friendly - My hand "shall not be heavy upon thee" (verse 7). The successful critic speaks softly and does not seek to cast blame. He wants his words to be corrective and not condemnatory. "A soft answer turns away wrath" (Proverbs 15:1).

Accept no hearsay evidence - "Surely thou hast spoken in mine hearing, and É have heard the voice of thy words" (verse 8). This is a rule in the courts of most nations today and was a principle in Roman jurisprudence as voiced by Festus in the trial of Paul, "It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have license to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him." This is the basis for the advice of Jesus in adjudicating differences amongst brethren in Matthew 18:15-17.

Condemn the sin and not the sinner - After listing the specific words of Job which he felt were wrong, Elihu states "Behold, in this thou art not just." It was the action, in this case the defensive words, of Job which Elihu felt were not right, and not that Job himself was wicked.

The words of Job which he quotes as being unjust fall basically into three categories:

- (1) "I am clean ... I am innocent" were probably a paraphrase of Job's words in Job 16:17, "Nor any injustice in my hands, my prayer is pure."
- (2) "He counteth me for his enemy" -Job's words in Job 19:11.
- (3) "He putteth my feet in the stocks" is a quote of Job 13:27.

The term "God hath spoken once, yea twice" in verse 14 is a Hebrew expression for repeatedly, and not an actual numbering. It is ironic that, wrong as the comforters were both in their spirit and in their specific accusations, by the time they had finished they were right in that Job had come to the point of self-justification. In sharp contrast are the words of David after having been cursed by Shimei, the Benjaminite, "And David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now may this Benjamite do it" let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD hath bidden him" (2 Samuel 16:11).

Elihu's claim is that there are times when God withholds his purpose from man and Job does not realize that certain hard experiences can be chastening from the Lord to reveal pride, and thus save a man from dying without adequate opportunity for repentance. He is thus recognizing that the effect of the prior conversations has been to move Job from his original innocence to a certain pride that charges God with unjust dealings in permitting evil.

MESSAGE OF REDEMPTION - JOB 33:23-30

These verses are the heart of the theological message of the book of Job. The Revised Version, as well as many other of the more accurate translations, renders verse 23, "If there be for him an angel, a mediator, one of the thousand, to declare to man what is right for him." This introduces a section which accurately describes the work of the Mediator in the Millennial Age work of reconciliation.

It is through the payment of the ransom that mankind will be delivered from going down to the pit. Then, in the resurrection of the dead, their flesh shall become fresher than a child. They will be then shown what is right for them and required just to do it, having the perfect ability to do so, with all influences to evil being restrained.

Thus mankind can properly pray to the Father, for they will be fully just when Christ renders unto man their righteousness. Because of that Mediator, any who will then unintentionally sin may pray for forgiveness, his soul shall be prevented from returning to the pit - to the condition of non-existence in death.

Thus, being sheltered from instant judgment, he will learn through his faults and he will see the light and the wisdom of doing things God's way, of following in the paths of righteousness. And this will not be a one-time for all chance, but God will work with man repeatedly throughout that thousand-year day (verses 29, 30).

ELIHU'S SECOND ADDRESS - JOB 34:1-36:26

Elihu now turns from Job and addresses the friends of Job, the self-presumed "wise men." Not trying to answer their accusations, even agreeing to a small extent with them, he says in essence, "This is not our judgment to make. Leave it to God. He will not pervert judgment" (Job 34:13). His words are similar to that of wise Gamaliel at the trial of Peter and John, "Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God" (Acts 5:38, 39).

He finishes his extended ode to the justice of God by uttering a truism, "When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble" (verse 29). Then, while condemning Job for his self-righteousness, he excuses him because his wrong position was a result of "his answers for wicked men" (verse 36), an obvious reference to the comforters for the rebellion they brought about in Job.

The first half of chapter 35 is further devoted to the judgments and the chastisements of God. To them who will hearken he assures a long life, to the wicked he predicts that there will be no deliverance from their suffering. If he is indeed including Job in the list of the wicked, as may be inferred, he would shortly be proven wrong by his own reasoning - for God would restore Job, and that twofold. Job would be among the poor delivered from their oppression (Job 36:15).

THE GATHERING STORM - JOB 36:27-37:24

While Elihu appears to be continuing his preceding discourse in this section, the fact that an actual storm occurred is confirmed in Job 38:1. Therefore it is logical to treat these verses as describing the onsetting squall. While they accurately describe a thunderstorm coming in from the north, the words may also be typical of the time of trouble with which the present dispensation shall come to an end.

The soft early drops of rain and the distant sound of thunder are noticed first. The oncoming clouds obscure the sun and the cattle are discontent. Then the lightning flashes in the sky as the thunder becomes a crashing roar. He notices the beasts take cover and the cold turns the rain into sleet and hail. His sharp eye catches the balance of the clouds - the one high and overhanging with the lower clouds filled with moisture. Contrasting the usual warm southerly wind, with this fast charging storm from the north, he is awestruck by the power and majesty of the scene.

Even so, in the times of harvest, it was the early rains of truth which foretold of God's coming judgments. As the enlightenment from the Lord became more clear, the noise of the progressing trouble was distinctly heard. Men could not see this as the Lord's dealings because these troublous times hid them from the Lord. God's true message noted the contrast of the warm winds of God's favor with the harsh north winds of his judgments. Both were necessary to accomplish their individual tasks. The Christian profits from both, as the wise man poetically said, "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out" (Song of Solomon 4:16).

JEHOVAH SPEAKS - CHAPTERS 38-39

It is from the midst of the storm, now termed a whirlwind, that Jehovah reveals himself to Job. It is in similar manner that Christ, at his apokalupsis, reveals himself to Israel and mankind (2 Thessalonians 1:7).

While some feel that the recrimination in Job 38:2, "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge," refers to Elihu, the last speaker; and some to all the comforters combined, it is more likely, in view of verse 1, that it refers to Job himself.

The majestic beauties and manifest wisdom in the ordering of creation form the basis for these words of God. The fascinating consideration of the specifics, noting the degree of modern -scientific knowledge revealed in these chapters, is a complete study in itself. A short catalog of these details might include:

The foundations of the earth - probably referring to the continental rock massifs that connect the land surface of the globe with its central core (Job 38:4).

The careful balancing of the water and land area of the planet referred to in Job 38:8.

How the cloud and rings of water provided the earth a protective greenhouse covering during the creative process (Job 38:9).

The interesting comparison between the planet's underground water supplies and ocean depths to the moral degradation and death itself (Job 38:16, 17).

The water reserves of the snows to provide year-round irrigation of the land, and how he uses these in times of trouble and battle, as in the flooding of the Kishon in the battle of Deborah and Barak against Sisera (Job 38:22, 23; Judges 5:21).

The astronomical accuracy of the verbs used in the poetic descriptions of such stellar constellations as Orion, the Pleiades, Arcturus, and all the signs of the zodiac [Mazzaroth in the Authorized Version] (Job 38:31, 32).

The provision of sustenance for the animals and the balancing of the food chain (Job 38:41).

The varying gestation periods of all of the animals (Job 39:1, 2).

The ability of God to provide and use even such untamable animals as the rhinoceros, and the unicorn of Job 39:9.

To provide the rich variety of plumage for the wild fowl (Job 39:13).

The list could go on, not even giving time for consideration of the possible symbolic significance of many of the pictures used.

The question remains - How does this description of the greatness of the Creator relate to the afflictions of Job and his enigma of understanding them. The answer lies in the beginning of chapter 40 where God ends his first discourse with the words, "Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? He that reproveth God, let him answer it."

Jehovah is emphasizing that Job must learn to trust him for caring for him and that as he has shown adequate ability to care for all other elements of creation, both animate and inanimate, so he has the ability and will to care for Job as well. This is a sharp reproof to Job's becoming so defensive to the fallacious arguments of the comforters as to develop a self-righteous posture, even accusing God of finding occasions against him. That would make God petty and reactive to human style emotions, instead of proactive in arranging the affairs of all his creation.

JOB'S RESPONSE TO GOD - JOB 40:3-5

Job got the message. "Behold, É am vile" is his response. After hearing of the majesty of his Creator, what else could he say? He promises to raise his voice no longer in self-justification. "Once have É spoken," then ye adds, "yea, twice," but he vows not to do so again. One thing is lacking, however. While there is a promise to not justify himself again, he does not yet repent for having done so previously. It takes God's next discourse to accomplish that feat.

JEHOVAH'S 2ND DISCOURSE - 40:7-41:34

Immediately God calls attention to this omission by saying in Job 40:8, "Wilt thou also disannul my judgment? Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?" He then asks him to look upon all who are proud and see how God controls them (verse 12). Then he chooses two examples to demonstrate his point.

The balance of chapters 40 and 41 deal with two animals, the identity of which we cannot be certain. The first of these is called in the Authorized Version "behemoth," and the latter "leviathan." Behemoth, debatably, has been identified with the hippopotamus and leviathan with the crocodile. Whether or not these identifications are accurate is a moot point. The important point is that which man cannot control is easily managed by God.

Jehovah concludes his discussion of these two by labeling the latter "a king over all the children of pride." This emphasizes his point.

THE RESTORATION OF JOB - CHAPTER 42

This is sufficient for job. Now he repents fully, saying in Job 42:6, "É abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." He mentions that he had uttered things "too wonderful for me" (verse 3). The word here for "wonderful" is "pala" (Strong's 381) and would be better translated "incomprehensible." Neither he nor his friends could comprehend a satisfactory reason for suffering.

Earlier in the dialog section of the book Job had uttered the hope "yet in my flesh shall É see God" (Job 19:26); now he says, "É have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee." Now he comprehends not only that Jehovah is the great Creator, but now he is the personal God of job and all his people, overseeing their every experience and testing to see whether they will serve him "for naught" (1:9).

Yet there remains one more test for this patient patriarch. God commands Eliphaz, evidently the leader as well as the oldest of the three, to contact his friends and have them bring a peace offering to Job, "for him will É accept" (verse 8). It is worth noting that he does not charge them with speaking ill of Job, but because "they have not spoken of me the thing which is right" (verse 8). On the other hand he says that Job has so spoken. He does not refer to the comments of job during the dialogs but after his repentance. He desires the same of them.

In verse 10 we read that it was only "when" Job prayed for his friends that his restoration began. He received double of all of his livestock, and had ten more children - three daughters and seven sons - even as he had originally. This, in itself, may hold a valuable point of truth. The livestock that were lost in the first chapter were lost forever, but he received twice as many back. The children who were killed at the beginning, however, will come back in the resurrection; therefore now he receives not twice the number of children, but the same as he had had. When the resurrection is complete, he will have also a double number of offspring.

Not only did the three comforters have to come with their peace offerings, but all of Job's brothers, sisters, and acquaintances had to come also and dine with him, showing their sorrow for his affections and each giving him two gifts - a coin and a gold earring.

In contrast to other Old Testament accounts, where we often learn of the names of the males and not the females, in Job's case it is the females whose names are recorded. Their names are rich in meaning: Jemima (a dove); Kezia (an aromatic herb, a sweet perfume); and Karen-hapuch (a horn of antimony, a cosmetic oil). All three were noted for their beauty (verses 14, 15).

The book closes with the information that Job lived for another 140 years (perhaps indicating his age at 70 when he was afflicted). This longevity permitted him to see his second set of children and their posterity until the fourth generation. Undoubtedly he could look back years later with the clear knowledge that his patience was well rewarded, that, hard as the experience was, it was not to be compared to his future life.

- To be Continued

Financial Statement

1,426.45	Balance January 2, 2001
2,800.00	Donations
10.14	Interest
-2,713.98	Expenses
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1,522.61	Balance December 31, 2001
563	Current Subscribers