

The Healing Message of Creation

After months of terrible sufferings, made even worse by the seeming abandonment by the God he had loved and served all his life, Job had now been rejected and accused of wickedness and hypocrisy by his closest friends. Finally, near the close of this bitterest day of his life, he had endured a lengthy diatribe by an arrogant young man who professed to have a direct message of condemnation of him from God himself. He had longed for some kind of word from God, or even from a God-sent “daysman,” but he felt that Elihu’s message could not really be that message, despite Elihu’s obvious intelligence and spiritual motivation. There seemed nothing more that Job could say.

God finally answered Job’s cries—not through an intermediary, but by direct revelation, coming in a mighty whirlwind and bringing a most amazing message. The cosmic drama initiated by Satan’s challenge to God’s testimony concerning Job’s righteousness was almost

over. Job had emerged victorious over all the tests Satan could devise and had vindicated God's proposal. Satan and the entire heavenly host had witnessed this demonstration of the efficacy of God's saving grace. God's "scientific hypothesis" had stood up under the most severe "falsification tests" that Satan could devise.

Though songs of victory may have been resounding in the heavens, there was still the unfinished business of Job's vindication on earth and the vindication of God's own moral order in the confused minds of those who had counseled Job when they themselves had been deceived.

The four-chapter message direct from God that climaxes the Book of Job is unparalleled by anything else in the Bible. Even unbelieving scholars acknowledge it as one of the world's greatest masterpieces of literature. As we shall see, however, it is much more than that. It enables us to understand God's great love and his eternal purposes in a unique, though somewhat disconcerting and surprising way. It also provides the long-needed key to effective and victorious living under circumstances of pain and sorrow.

The Witness of Creation

Through the day of traumatic confrontation, Job, his friends, and Elihu, had wrestled with the great problem of undeserved suffering. This problem, addressed philosophically and theologically by every generation, has come to little resolution. It is perhaps the most difficult of all human problems, both because of its intellectual mysteries and its experiential agonies. It probably is the most common of all excuses given by men and women for renouncing belief in a God of love and power.

The problem comes to its sharpest focus in the testing of Job and the intense, probing dialogue between him and his friends. The solution championed by Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar involved Job in secret sinning and unrelenting hypocrisy. Although this explanation may be correct in

some cases, it is not always true, and it certainly was not true in Job's case. Both Job and God vigorously denied this charge (Job 42:7).

Elihu repeated the charges with what some think was a slightly different twist, suggesting that God was using Job's sufferings as a chastening device, for instructional purposes. For example, Elihu urged Job to respond as follows: "I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more: That which I see not teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more" (Job 34:331-32).

Job had repeatedly spoken words to the same effect, but Elihu ignored them. Job did not know of any way in which he had failed to do God's will, but he was anxious to learn about it if he had. The fact is, Job's sufferings were not to teach him what was wrong in his life, but to teach Satan what God's grace can accomplish in a human life dedicated to serving the Lord.

Since God did not rebuke Elihu as he did Job's three friends, some commentators suggest that Elihu's message was basically correct. As discussed in the preceding chapter, however, Elihu's message was both arrogant, purporting falsely to be from God, and grossly misleading. The fact that God did not refer to it suggests not that it was right, but that it did not merit recognition. Although God did not specifically repudiate it, neither did he commend or even acknowledge it.

The only passing reference to it is found in God's opening question to Job: "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?" (Job 38:2). Elihu had claimed to have a message direct from God for Job, but then God acted as though he did not even know Elihu! This was a rhetorical question, for God is omniscient, but it makes it obvious that Elihu didn't know what he was talking about. Unfortunately the same teachers who eulogize Elihu argue that these words were intended for Job. This is impossible, however, for it was Elihu—not Job—who had been speaking at great length just before God

interrupted him out of the whirlwind. Furthermore, God later testified that what Job had said was “right;” he had not spoken “words without knowledge.” The question, “Who is this...?” was addressed to Job, of course, because God knew Job, but it was *about* Elihu.

The solutions offered by Job’s three friends and by Elihu to the problem of suffering, whether punishment for sin or chastisement for instruction, were inadequate solutions and, in Job’s case, completely wrong. Job himself had no solution and desperately appealed to God to provide one while steadfastly maintaining his faith in God and in an ultimate resolution.

So, then, what is God’s solution? When he finally enters the dialogue himself, what does he say about this vexing problem of human suffering—especially about suffering that has no obvious relation to the sin of the afflicted one? What a great help it would be as we witness to skeptics and atheists if we had a convincing, satisfying answer to this mystery. People say that the Book of Job was written to solve this problem, so what does God have to say about it?

Amazingly, God says nothing about it! His divine message, given out of the whirlwind, occupies 123 verses in four chapters, yet there is not a word about the sufferings of Job, or even about human suffering in general.

What God does talk about is creation! The mighty message from heaven focuses exclusively on the doctrine of special creation of all things by God, and then his providential care of his creation. It exalts his power, his wisdom, his purpose, his love.

This seems very surprising at first, but the reason it seems surprising is that, in our present humanistic culture, even Christians have become self-centered instead of God-centered. We emphasize personal Christianity, personal experience, self-image, inter-personal relationships, and what Jesus can do to meet our needs. All these have their place in the Christian life, but not when they relegate God and his purpose in creation to only a peripheral role in our

thoughts and deeds.

It is not that Job and his counselors doubted the truth of creation or God's wisdom and power in it; they repeatedly referred to aspects of creation. Note, for example, the words of Eliphaz (Job 5:9-10), Bildad (Job 25:2-5), Zophar (Job 11:7-9), and especially Elihu (Job 36:26-37:24). Job, of course, had more to say about creation than any of them (Job 9:4-10; 12:16-25; 26:6-14; 28:1-28). It was not that the truth of creation was not recognized by Job and his friends. In fact, there is probably more about the creative and providential works of God in Job than in any other book of the Bible.

Why, then, should this be the sole theme of God's response to the philosophical and theological disputation of Job and his counselors? God's response, at first, seems inadequate when these believers were groping for answers to great human needs and problems.

God is not capricious, however, and he has good reason for everything he says and does. He was deeply concerned with Job, his suffering, and his reaction to it. Therefore, his reply to Job's pleadings could not have indicated indifference. Instead, silence must have been the best possible answer, both to the wrong solutions proposed by his friends and to Job's confusion as he sought to understand them.

This leads us to the remarkable conclusion that a correct and complete doctrine of creation is the answer to all the problems that burden this present hurting world. Rather than placing too much emphasis on creation, Job and his friends needed to give it more emphasis. Creation should have first priority in their thinking, no matter what problem they were facing. If God himself laid such stress on it in dealing with this most vexing of all human problems, we would also do well to give it priority when dealing with this or lesser problems. Before proceeding with a fuller study of God's message in these chapters, we need to consider the broader scope of biblical revelation on God's creation.

The Vital Importance of Special Creation

Many modern evangelicals believe that Christian creationists stress the doctrine of special creation too much. Even many pastors and Christian leaders who have not adopted a compromise position on origins seem to consider creation so unimportant that they rarely, if ever, preach on it. This is a tragic mistake.

The foundational importance of creation is indicated, first of all, by its primary position in the Bible. The first two chapters of Genesis provide the basic foundation for every other significant doctrine of the Bible. And in Job, the next oldest book of scripture, we find the Lord placing paramount emphasis on creation as he brings the great drama to its climactic close.

Those who protest that the doctrine of salvation is more important than creation and thus merits greater emphasis, should note that all doctrines related to salvation are directly based on creation. Jesus Christ was the Creator long before he became the Savior, “for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth” (Col. 1:16). Similarly, creation is the foundation of the gospel of our salvation, a fact made especially clear in the last biblical mention of the gospel. “And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, fear God, and give glory to him;...and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters” (Rev. 14:6-7). This “everlasting gospel” centers on worshiping God as Creator of all things. The Scriptures give a sober warning against following even “an angel from heaven” if he should “preach any other gospel” than the gospel preached by Paul (Gal. 1:8), so there can be no doubt that the gospel preached by the angel of revelation is the same gospel of Christ that Paul preached.

Similarly, the faith in Christ by which we are saved and by which we live is, first of all, faith in special creation.

This is made clear in Hebrews 10:38-11:3. Those who are “just [i.e., justified or declared righteous by God] shall live by faith” (Heb. 10:38), for these “believe [i.e., have faith] to the saving of the soul” (Heb. 10:39). This living, saving faith is defined first of all as follows: “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear” (Heb. 11:3). Note that this definition precludes the possibility of evolution being “God’s method of creation,” as many would like to believe. If that were the case, the “things which are seen” would have been made out of pre-existing materials, or “things which appear.” True creation is “creation *ex nihilo*,” or “creation out of nothing” except the power of the Word of God, which, according to John 1:1-3, 14 is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus, genuine creation, instead of being a peripheral doctrine, is absolutely vital to true Christianity. It is the foundation of the gospel of Christ. Furthermore, to know the Lord Jesus Christ as he really is (not as “another Jesus,” as in 2 Cor. 11:4 or as some “false Christ,” as prophesied in Mark 13:22), we must recognize him as Creator as well as Savior. Finally, saving faith in Christ is, first of all, focused on the truth of the *ex nihilo* creation of all things by Christ. It was appropriate, therefore, that when God finally answered Job, he emphasized the significance of special creation.

Creation is also basic in evangelism and missions, according to the Bible. The one book of the Bible written specifically to lead people to Christ is the Gospel of John. John stated his purpose as follows: “These [signs] are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:31). All the great signs of John’s Gospel were mighty miracles of supernatural creation (e.g., turning water into wine). Accomplishable only by the Creator himself. Most importantly, John *began* his gospel with an emphasis on creation, starting with the words of Genesis 1:1: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was

with God, and the Word was God....All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:1-3). If John, whose divinely inspired purpose in writing was to win people to Christ, began with creation, then so should others who have the same aim. When people say (as many do) that we should not be concerned with creation but only with winning souls for Christ, they don't realize that this is a contradiction. We must be concerned with creation if we really want to get people saved and not just sentimentally involved with "another Jesus."

This was the approach followed by the apostles when they first went out preaching the gospel in obedience to the Great Commission. Whenever Paul, for example, went into a synagogue, he would open the Scriptures to show that Jesus had fulfilled the Messianic prophecies. Then he would prove that Jesus was the long-awaited Redeemer by pointing to Christ's resurrection from the dead. Note, for example, the account of his ministry to the Jews in Antioch (Acts 13:14-43) and Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-3). The Jews already believed the Scriptures were the Word of God. Therefore, they believed in the true God and in the biblical record of creation, so the apostles could build on this foundation.

When they went to the pagan Gentiles, however, they were speaking to people who neither knew nor believed the Bible. They were all evolutionary pantheists (Stoics, Epicureans, Gnostics, Platonists, etc.) who believed neither in one supreme personal God nor in special creation. In such cases, Paul began his preaching by pointing out that the world had been specially created and that they were responsible, first of all, to their Creator.

At Lystra, for example, they cried out; "We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless, he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from

heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness” (Acts 14:15-16).

Similarly, when Paul witnessed to the Greek philosophers at Athens, he said: “God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth...giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation” (Acts 17:24-26).

The reason that men of all times and places need a Savior and Redeemer is that they are in a state of rebellion against their Creator; they have “changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature [i.e., the world, its systems, or its created beings] more than the Creator” (Rom. 1:25). This is as true for modern atheists, humanists, Communists, Buddhists, and all other varieties of evolutionists as it was for the ancient pantheistic evolutionists. Men and women must first be brought back to a recognition of their Creator before they can comprehend the meaning of sin against him and salvation by him.

Still, this is not all. Creation is not only the basis of true Christology, true faith, and true salvation, but also of true fellowship and true peace among human beings. Christ has paid the price, “having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven” (Col.1:20).

Before people can be truly reconciled to one another, they must be reconciled to God. Peace on earth among men pre-supposes peace between men and God. The purpose on earth of those who have been reconciled to God is to bring others to the same happy condition. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature [i.e., God has created in him new spiritual life, by means of the same creative omnipotence with which he spoke the world into being]:... And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of

reconciliation;...Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:17-20).

With these facts in mind, note the amazing revelation given to the apostle Paul. "By revelation he made known unto me the mystery;...Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men,...That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs,...And partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:...and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ" (Eph. 3:3-9).

This rich passage tells us that God created all things by Jesus Christ so that all men—Jews and Gentiles alike—might enjoy fellowship together in the gospel of Christ. True fellowship among men and nations can only be achieved through him who created all things, who upholds all things by the word of His power (Heb. 1:3), and who has paid the price "to reconcile all things" (Col. 1:20). Those who receive him as their Redeemer become new creations in Christ, henceforth to live for him in implementing the ministry of reconciliation. Thus, the doctrine of creation is the basic foundation upon which genuine fellowship in Christ must be built.

The Real Purpose of the Book of Job

The above considerations bring us finally to the reason for Job's record. At a deeper level, this must be the reason God allowed Satan to initiate and impose such terrible sufferings upon such a godly man.

The purpose underlying the Book of Job seems to be twofold—one directed heavenward, the other earthward. In the first place, the whole drama had begun with Satan's challenge in heaven in the presence of all the other "sons of God." Therefore, not only Satan and his demonic hosts but also all the holy angels of God must have been following the developments on earth with intense interest.

This, in fact, is a part of God's own purpose in the creation and redemption of men and women on earth. In the same passage that deals with the mystery of God's creation of true fellowship, as cited above, Paul notes this heavenly aspect of our testimony. "And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:9-11).

Thus, Job's ordeal and his faithfulness through it was a marvelous testimony—not only to Satan but also to the entire host of heaven—of the glorious effectiveness of God's great plan. It provided tremendous incentive to all the holy angels to serve more faithfully themselves as "ministering spirits" to the "heirs of salvation" (Heb. 1:14). They continue to this day observing with intense interest the outworkings of God's salvation in our own lives, especially in times of stress and trouble. "Of which salvation...the angels desire to look into" (1 Peter 1:10-12). Those who have already gone from this life to be with the Lord also are probably deeply concerned observers of our lives on earth. "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:1-2).

Job's record also had an important earthward testimony, as evidenced by God's magnificent four-chapter message at its conclusion. This message, which said nothing about Job's sufferings nor about the observing hosts in heaven, dealt instead with God's great creation and his providential care over it. Thus, here at the beginning of God's gracious gift of divine revelation to men, in the ancient Book of Job, God

again stressed the importance of the creation he had first revealed in the opening chapters of Genesis.

In Job's day, most nations were rapidly drifting away from monotheistic creationism into pantheistic, polytheistic, evolutionary humanism. Even though Job and his friends still believed in God and frequently referred to his creation, God indicated the need for a much stronger emphasis to keep the still-believing remnant from drifting into pagan evolutionism.

That being the case, we can infer that a still stronger emphasis on creation is needed today, when the intellectual establishments of almost every nation have repudiated it and evolutionism reigns supreme in the schools, media, sciences, and political institutions. Today, as in communist nations, blatant atheism often is legislated. The ancient pantheistic evolutionism still dominates such ethnic religions as Hinduism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, Shintoism, and animism. Even in such nominally monotheistic nations and faiths as Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, evolutionary humanism and practical atheism seems to control the thinking of their leaders. Most alarming of all, perhaps, is that even those Christian institutions still giving nominal allegiance to Christ and to biblical authority have largely allowed it to be undermined by such unbiblical (and unscientific) compromises as theistic evolutionism and progressive creationism.

The need, therefore, for a worldwide revival of the doctrine of real creation and a personal creator God is great. God's urgent message to Job and his contemporaries is more vital now than ever before.

God's message spoke directly to the personal needs of Job and to the "suffering saints" of all times and places. Our "God of all grace" (1 Peter 5:10) and "God of all comfort" (2 Cor. 1:3) was certainly not indifferent to the hurts of his beloved and faithful servant Job. He had heard Job's prayers, even though Job did not know it. Although God did not choose to tell Job the reason for his suffering, he did give Job a way of escape (1 Cor. 10:13).

That way of escape was to recognize and reaffirm God's right, as Creator, to do what he wills with his creatures. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right" (Gen. 18:25), whether our time-bound minds can understand his ways or not?

To Job's pleas for understanding God answered, in effect: "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou make me thus?" (Rom. 9:20). "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counselor?" (Rom. 11:33, 34).

Job did not need to know why he was suffering, and neither do we today. God may, in grace, explain in particular cases, but he is under no obligation to do so. In some cases suffering may be punishment for sins or a form of instructional chastisement, and we should prayerfully and submissively examine this possibility. Job's friends and Elihu were correct in insisting that God uses such methods when appropriate, even though they are not the invariable, or even usual, explanation for suffering.

If, like Job, we are called to endure trouble or sorrow, and if, like him, we are confident it is not related to sin, then God's great message to Job will have a healing impact on our own hearts as well.

As we contemplate the magnificence of his great act of creation, his continuing daily works of providence, and his marvelous gift of salvation, we will see our own problems in the perspective of eternity. We can say, with Paul: "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:17). "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18).

We have far better understanding of this today than Job had, for we have Christ's example to guide and encourage us. "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also

suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (1 Peter 1:21-23).

Later we shall even note some remarkable parallels between the sufferings of Job and those of Christ. For now, however, we need to look in some detail at the majestic message of creation given us by God Himself.