

JOB WHO SAW LIGHT AT THE END OF HIS TUNNEL
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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).

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews is the Christian's Art Gallery of Faith. The writer of this remarkable letter was evidently a Jew who was well acquainted with the tabernacle and temple ritual. He was a dedicated Christian who saw in the ancient writings promises fulfilled in Christ. The letter was scholarly, illuminating, and practical. He was aware of the skepticism that prevailed among Jews and endeavored to prove that without faith it is impossible to please God. To support that conclusion, he compiled a list of national ancestors whose faith in Jehovah was outstanding. He explained that although the patriots were limited in their knowledge, they found happiness in believing. They had faith in God, accepted His promises, and courageously lived and died in the confidence that the Lord was still on His throne.

The author's list of celebrities was remarkable. He mentioned Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and others. Finally when he was running out of time and space on his manuscript, he said: "And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets" (Heb. 11:32). The list of important people is tremendous, but this author at least wishes another name had been included. The writer of this epistle never mentioned Job, who saw light at the end of a long tunnel of darkness and gloom. That strange but inspiring man had more faith than many others. His vision of the future was amazing; his words became immortal. Many biblical celebrities left nothing to posterity, but every Easter the words of the patriarch are heard around the world. "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth." That statement will never lose its charm.

When the writer to the Hebrews summarized the accomplishments of the Old Testament believers, he said: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Heb. 11:13). A stranger is a person away from home: a pilgrim is one on a journey to a beloved place! "He [Abraham] looked for a city whose builder and maker was God" (Heb. 11:10). "For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city" (Heb. 11:14-16). Abraham looked for a city built by God, but the Lord not only built a city, He also prepared a country.

Unlike those wonderful people, Job apparently did not see everything, but he understood some things equally important. He saw that the Redeemer would come to this world, and by the miracle of redemption Job would see God. That would be a privilege never given to any other Old Testament believer. When Moses climbed Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments, he was allowed to see God's back as Jehovah passed by, but Job understood and emphasized that with his own eyes he would behold the Almighty. That amazing man saw four wonderful facts.

He Saw the Worth of a Soul... Remarkable

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My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me. They that dwelt 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. Have pity upon me, have pity upon me. O ye my friends: for the hand of God hath touched me (Job 19:14-21).

Job's physical condition was terrible to behold: most men in his position would have welcomed death. The once-prominent citizen had become a feeble pauper. His family and friends

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despised him. His appearance was appalling, for he was nothing but skin and bones, and his body was covered with boils and carbuncles. It was difficult to lie on a bed. Doctors could not alleviate his suffering, and no one could remove the pain from his soul. His body emitted an offensive odor. His breath was sickening. and everybody believed it would be best if he died.

Nevertheless, one fact supplied comfort. There was apparently no hope of his recovery, but he looked into the future and saw a Friend. Job said. "I know that my redeemer liveth." Hebrew law permitted a kinsman to redeem any enslaved relative, but redemption was not obligatory. If the slave were worthless, his family could be indifferent, and allow him to remain in bondage. Boaz could not redeem Ruth until another man refused to exercise his prior claim. A desire to redeem had to be the compelling circumstance motivating action. It was significant that Job believed he was still valuable in the sight of God, for otherwise the Lord would not be interested in redeeming a useless slave. The poor man referred to my redeemer. He believed that God was still concerned about him. Even if he were a sick, friendless old man, God could redeem him for future service. When earthly friends could not or would not help, the Almighty would respond to his need. That message should provide comfort for desperate people everywhere.

Some oppressed souls have been overwhelmed by circumstances beyond their control; others contributed to their own downfall. But even when people are repulsive, God considers them to be of more value than the whole world.

He Saw the Work of the Savior... Redemption

The exact period in which Job lived is unknown. but it must be significant that he did not refer to his helper as "God." nor did he mention "Jehovah." He said my redeemer, and that implied he was seeing light at the end of his tunnel of misery. Any person wishing to redeem someone had to belong to the slave's family. The Redeemer had to come to the slave owner and pay whatever was necessary. Later, in Jewish law he was required to stand in the presence of elders, pay the price of redemption, and, removing a shoe, throw it over his shoulder as evidence the transaction had been completed.

It would be informative if we knew how the patriarch learned such truth. Apparently there was not a prophet during Job's lifetime, and no temple in which people could seek enlightenment. Yet, in some mysterious manner. Job discovered amazing truth. God, who lived in the sky. would become human, come to earth, and pay whatever was necessary to redeem a sinner. Would it be correct to suggest that this man was the first human ever to

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possess such wisdom? Long afterward the apostle Peter wrote: "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things. as silver and gold . . . but with the precious blood of Christ. as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (I Peter 1:18-19).

He Saw the Wonder of Salvation... Resurrection

And though ... worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God (Job 19:26).

When Job uttered these words, he did not know God was about to remove the infirmity and restore what had been lost. His body was a mass of corruption. and there was no hope of recovery. It was in the darkest hour of his life that Job said: "Though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." Had he said: "Though worms destroy this body. I shall see God," he would have expressed the belief that somewhere beyond the grave his spirit would behold the Almighty. When he said: In my flesh, he implied that in spite of the continued deterioration of his health, the Redeemer would supply a new body which would be incorruptible and immortal. Job believed the Lord would stand upon the earth in the latter day. Possibly he understood that God would be the Savior. Worms destroyed Job's first body, but nothing would disfigure, hurt, or defile that new body in which he would live eternally. Paul and Job would have enjoyed discussing these facts, for Paul wrote:

Behold I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. 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. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? (1 Cor. 15:51-55).

He Saw the Worship of a Saint... Recognition

Yet in my flesh, shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself. and mine eyes shall behold, and not another (Job 19:26-27).

And they shall see his face: and his name shall be in their foreheads (Rev. 22:4).

Philip saith unto him. Lord. shew us the Father and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him. Have I been so long time with you. and yet hast thou not known me. Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then. Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me. he doeth the works (John 14:8-10).

Man's relationship with the Almighty has always been mystical. God walked in the Garden of Eden because He desired fellowship with Adam and Eve. Unfortunately they were expelled from the area. Later, when the cloud and fire hovered over the tabernacle, Israel knew Jehovah was in the vicinity. Centuries later Jesus called and ordained disciples who never understood how to enjoy fellowship with God. Philip expressed the thoughts of his colleagues when he asked Jesus to reveal the Father. The Lord's reply was clear and convincing: "Philip, if you desire to see the Father, look at Me. If you wish to hear His word, listen to me. I am the Father walking among you, talking with you, and loving you as any father would love his children."

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Throughout the remaining part of their lives those men believed God had lived among them, and their greatest hope was that soon they would see Him again. John described how Christians, having reached their eternal home, would "see his face." He also wrote how "the four and twenty elders fell down and worshiped him that liveth for ever and ever" (Rev. 5:14).

Doubtless there will be things to do and many places to visit during the eternal ages, but of one thing there can be no doubt. When the redeemed church see the nailprints in the hands of the Lord and realize that without His love reaching heaven would have been impossible, they will fall at His feet and worship. Souls who die in faith will live eternally.

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