
Covenant Reformed News

June 2012 • Volume XIV, Issue 2

The Book of Job and the Nature of Man (1)

Like the rest of the Bible, the book of Job teaches that man is a unified being with two “aspects” or “parts:” body and soul or spirit (Matt. 10:28; Luke 16:22-23; 23:43, 46, 52). Thus Elihu speaks of God’s gathering man’s “spirit” and man’s body turning again to “dust” after death: “If he [i.e., Jehovah] set his heart upon man, if he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath; all flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust” (Job 34:14-15).

Like Ecclesiastes 12:7 (“Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it”), Job 34:14-15 refers to the dissolution of man into his two constitutive “parts,” according to his original creation in Genesis 2:7: “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”

The statement that God “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life” is echoed in Job 34:14 (“if he [i.e., God] gather unto himself his spirit and his breath”) and especially in Elihu’s confession, “The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life” (33:4; cf. 12:10), and Job’s reference to his breath and nostrils: “All the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils” (27:3).

Turning to man’s material dimension, Elihu affirms, “I also [like Job and all men] am formed out of the clay” (33:6). Being created out of the earth, Job knows that he will return whence he was formed: “Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me as the clay; and wilt thou bring me into dust again?” (10:9). Similarly, he speaks of those who “dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth” (4:19). As Elihu puts it, “man shall turn again unto dust” (34:15).

This teaching on man’s physical constitution in the book of Job is in perfect accord with the opening chapters of the Bible, for “the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground” (Gen. 2:7) and Jehovah said to Adam after the fall, “dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (3:19). So basic to Job is the scriptural view that man, as to his material dimension, was created out of dust, dwells in a body of clay and will return to ashes, that that ancient, patient saint even refers to the maxims and arguments of his three “friends” as weak as the earthly nature of man: “ashes” and “clay” (Job 13:12).

Look at Job, formed out of dust, sitting among the ashes, scraping Himself with a potsherd made out clay (2:7-8)! His breath is failing (17:1), painful (7:19; 9:18) and noxious, so that even his wife shrinks from him (19:17)! No wonder the book of Job speaks so often and movingly of man’s nature, echoing Genesis 2:7! *Rev. Stewart*

Invitation or Command?

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,” Christ declares in Matthew 11:28. “In this text,” asks a reader, “is Jesus inviting us or commanding us to come to Him?”

The text in question is often (though wrongly) cited by the defenders of a gracious and well-meant gospel offer to everybody. Jesus’ words are interpreted to mean that Christ is inviting all men to come to Him. The text, then, is not a command, but an invitation. It is an invitation in which Christ graciously expresses His desire that all men head for head will come to Him to receive salvation. That interpretation teaches that, because the text is an invitation, the coming to Christ is the work of man who chooses to come. An invitation can be accepted or rejected, after all.

The gracious and well-meant gospel offer is contrary to Scripture. Jesus is most emphatically not inviting all men to come to Him. He has just prayed to His Father, “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight” (25-26). Is it even remotely possible that Jesus would thank God for hiding the truth from some and revealing it to others and then turn around and beg every man to come to Him? A man is not thinking straight if he talks that kind of language.

Moreover, after concluding this prayer to His Father, Jesus goes on to say, “All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will [i.e., desires to] reveal him” (27).

Jesus makes it abundantly clear that while it is God’s will to hide spiritual truths from the wise and reveal these same truths unto babes, He, who alone knows the Father, is commissioned to accomplish His Father’s will. Those who teach a gracious and well-meant offer want us to believe that Christ, who carries out the will of His Father in hiding and revealing, now suddenly turns around and tells everyone to whom He preaches that both He and God earnestly desire that everyone head for head be saved.

It is preposterous! Nor will it help to scurry away from the text and hide behind the bush of “apparent contradiction.” That is a coward’s escape.

No wonder Jesus tells the multitude in Capernaum, “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37). Christ assures His disciples and all who hear Him that all the elect, given Him by the Father, will and do, in fact, come to Him. Therefore, not only is it certain that all the elect will come to Him, but it is also certain that only the elect will come to Him; no one else. Is it not, therefore, preposterous to say that Jesus, in spite of this fact, still pleads with everyone to come to Him? It will not work to take refuge in the crumbling tower of “apparent contradiction.”

Nor does Scripture leave room for man’s free will, something the defenders of the well-meant

offer cunningly do. Christ says, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:44).

There is no safety from the clear words of Scripture in the lame excuse of “apparent contradiction.” Nor does the arrow, shot from a broken bow, hit anything by calling those who deny this “apparent contradiction” and the gracious well-meant offer “rationalists.” Name-calling can never successfully defend the lie.

Matthew 11:28 is a beautiful text. Briefly, its beauty lies in the fact that Jesus is not calling all men, but only His beloved people. Those who “labour and are heavy laden” are, in the first instance, those, still in the old dispensation, who heard the demands of the law and knew in their hearts they could not keep that law. The law had become to them a burden too great to bear and it confronted them with an obligation that they knew they could never accomplish.

Jesus words are beautiful: “In the law there is no peace and the burden to keep it is too great to carry. Come to Me; My yoke is easy and My burden light.” It is the call to every sin-crushed sinner, whether Jew or Gentile, whether in the first or twenty-first century, who has tried to save himself, but finds God’s demand forever beyond him.

Those who know this are those who are given to Christ by God, that is, the elect. The Spirit of Christ has begun His work, for the only way to Christ is the way of sorrow for sin, shame that fills the soul of the child of God with horror, and a deep longing to escape the consequences of not doing what he knows he must do, but cannot.

Is this an invitation of Christ? Well, only if you understand that an invitation from the King of kings comes as a command. An invitation to a birthday party of a friend you may accept or reject. An invitation from the Lord of heaven and earth is a command that you had better obey—or lose your life!

It is, therefore, a command, without doubt. But it is couched in a way that, in the Lord’s command to come to Him with the burden of sin, He speaks tenderly and with infinite love, for He woos God’s elect to Him by sweet words. He knows how great the burden of the sin of His people can be. He knows how, crushed beneath their sin, they wonder whether God can possibly ever receive them. He knows that they are so ashamed that to come to Christ seems a boldness too great for an unworthy sinner.

The words are calculated to give us courage, courage in Christ’s love for us, a love that is too great for us to comprehend. The Lord does not say to you and me, “Come to Me—or else.” His voice is not harsh and threatening. He comes in His love for poor, chastised, frightened sinners who know their sins make them unworthy even for Christ to take a quick glance in their direction. “Come to Me ... I fulfilled the law for you who cannot keep it. I will give you rest—rest in salvation by grace alone!” *Prof. Hanko*

One of the thirteen chapters of Herman Hoeksema’s [*Whosoever Will*](#) is a moving meditation on Matthew 11:28. This book is available from the CPRC for £8.80 (inc. P&P).

Jehovah's Witnesses and the Name of God (2)

The Jehovah's Witnesses (JWs) claim that, when Jesus proclaimed the name of God in Israel (John 17:26), He taught the JW (and Unitarian) view of the divine name "Jehovah." Instead, Christ taught them who God is and what kind of God He is, through His words and deeds, for He, as the incarnate Son, is the revelation of the Triune God (1:14; 14:9). To know God's name is not merely to know the letters which make up the word "Jehovah," but to know God Himself, His attributes, wonders, works and promises in Christ, and to fellowship with Him in His Son (John 17:3; I John 1:3; 5:20). Nowhere in the gospels do we read of Jesus calling God "Jehovah." Even in John 17, the greatest of Christ's recorded prayers, He addresses God as "Father" (1, 5, 21, 24), "holy Father" (11) and "righteous Father" (25). In the prayer which He taught His disciples, He has us address God as "Our Father which art in heaven" (Matt. 6:9). Why not "Jehovah," if that is the preferred, if not the only acceptable, name of God?

The essence of the name "Jehovah" appears in the NT. Five times in Revelation, God is addressed as Him "which is, and which was, and which is to come" (1:4, 8) or "which was, and is, and is to come" (4:8) or "which art, and wast, and art to come" (11:17) or "which art, and wast, and shalt be" (16:5). These allusions to Exodus 3:14 and the name "Jehovah" clearly refer to God's unchangeable eternity and faithfulness.

In John 8, Jesus affirms, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day" (56), to which the unbelieving Jews retort in scorn, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" (57). Christ's response so shocks the Jews that they pick up stones to put Him to death on the spot for blasphemy. Here is the JWs' New World Translation (NWT) of what Jesus said: "Before Abraham came into existence, *I have been.*" The KJV rightly translates, "Before Abraham was, *I am*" (58). Why does the NWT mistranslate the Greek (*ego eimi*) as "I have been," instead of "I am"? Because the JWs refuse to believe that Jesus is Jehovah and they want to sever the obvious link between John 8:58 and Exodus 3:14, where *ego eimi* is used in the Septuagint (LXX)!

As we have seen, though the NT does not contain the word "Jehovah," the truth of Jehovah is writ large all over the NT. It is found even in the name "Jesus," which means Jehovah-salvation, Jehovah is salvation or Jehovah Saviour. That is why Peter declares of Jesus that "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). That, too, is why Paul can state, in obvious allusion to Isaiah 45:23, that God has given Christ "a name which is above every name," so that "every knee should bow ... [and] every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11).

The JWs use the word "Jehovah" in their prayers, worship, Bible perversion and proselytizing, but they do not truly confess Jehovah, because their "Jehovah" is not the sovereign, unchanging, faithful, Triune God of Scripture. The Jehovah's Witnesses could more accurately be called the False Witnesses for they are guilty of taking God's name in vain. *Rev. Martyn McGeown, Limerick Reformed Fellowship*