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CONCORDIA SEMINARY

AN EXAMINATION OF THE THEOLOGY OF BLESSING
AS FOUND IN THE BOOK OF JOB

A SEMINAR PAPER SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF CONCORDIA SEMINARY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTERS OF SACRED THEOLOGY

DEPARTMENT OF EXEGETICS

BY

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PREFACE

An Opportunity To Examine In Job A Lifelong Interest

God gave me the opportunity some years ago to begin research into a concept that has drawn a great deal of attention during the last two decades: the concept of blessing. As a missionary in Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, and now among Chinese in Southern California, the topic of blessing comes up repeatedly. Even among Chinese Christians the topic of “success/prosperity theology” is often raised. As Christians we know absolutely that God blesses, but how exactly does God’s Word conceptualize and demonstrate the outworking of blessing? What constitutes blessing as defined by the parameters of Divine revelation? When the opportunity came to study Job with Dr. Mitchell, whose doctoral dissertation was on בָּרַךְ /brk, *bless*, it seemed as though God had allowed me to pursue this topic in one of the most significant blessing treatises of God’s Word. As stated by Habel: “In the prologue of Job there is a plot anticipation centering on the blessing (as well as the curse) motif that will be in evidence throughout the book.”¹

The Chinese Concept Of “Fu”

The Character Itself

Blessing is one of the most interwoven concepts within the fabric of

¹ John E. Hartley, The New International Commentary On The Old Testament, The Book Of Job (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), p.391.

Chinese society. Awareness of its presence or lack thereof affects every aspect of one's daily existence. Marriage prospects are more readily entertained when the candidate is considered as one who has "blessing". During Chinese New Year specific practices, i.e. not trimming or washing one's hair, are methodically followed in order to achieve "blessing".

The character for blessing itself is vitally connected with Chinese Christianity. In Chinese 福音 *Blessing Words* is the translation of *Gospel*. The character for *blessing*, written 福, and pronounced "fu", with the second or rising tone sound, is made up of one major character larger than all the rest, 礻, meaning *God*. The other three appear to the right of the *God* radical, forming a vertical column of equal height with the first character. Of these three, the top most is 一, pronounced "yi", first or middle tone, and means *one*. The middle character is 口, pronounced "ko", third or falling then rising tone, means *mouth* and is representative of a *person*. The third and bottom character, 田, pronounced "tien", first or middle tone, means *field*. Placed together they form a picture graph stating in picture graph form that *blessing* is the gift of God Who provides enough from one field to feed a person.

It is easy to decipher how intimately God is involved in the Asian concept of blessing. This association is even more exciting when we realize that earliest Chinese religion held that there was one supreme god² above all the others, an indication that even in this great civilization there are memories, though perhaps

² Ethel R. Nelson and Richard E. Broadberry, Genesis And The Mystery Confucius Couldn't Solve (St. Louis, MO.: Concordia Publishing House, 1994), p.20.

progressively clouded, of the One True God who is the real Giver of blessing. Today Chinese culture yet focuses on blessing, but far away from the One who has the power to bestow.

Examples From Chinese Society

The Temple

The Chinese concept of blessing is very critical, but rather materialistic. Usually blessing is sought for the enhancement of one's life or of the loved one's family and relations. The primary place of supposedly obtaining blessing is at one of the many temples. Larger temples draw greater crowds due to their having "greater power." Smaller temples are even more numerous and are likewise frequented by people, especially if it has a name for great power. Tainan, Taiwan, is a 68 sq. mile city of over 690,000 people. It has earned the nickname "The City of A Hundred Temples." In actuality there are 220 major temples and countless minor shrines. People go to the temples to burn incense, make food offerings, donate money and to pray to the Buddhas of Buddhism, to the pantheon of different gods of Taoism, or to the animistic spirits and the spirits of departed relatives of Chinese folk religion. The goal of the temple visit or the ceremonies that take place in front of the family idol is to enable achievement of a better life. Blessing may mean that sickness will be alleviated, the anger and harsh effects of angry spirits will be placated, money will be gained, businesses will achieve success, the stock in which one has invested will perform well, children will be born, peace will be obtained, and/or a true friend will be found.

The temple, however, is not a place where one goes because one loves the idol. The general rule of thumb is not to go there unless some necessity so dictates. The supernatural elements are best left alone.

“Fung Seui”

Blessing tends to be mechanistic in nature. One of the ways that Chinese seek to set in motion the blessing cycle is to go to a geomancer who supposedly has the ability to determine how buildings, graves, and so forth might be constructed in order to achieve the most advantageous results. The method he uses is “fung seui”, literally “wind (&) water.”

In Hong Kong a number of years ago a story was told of family X who supposedly did use this method to bury their relative, planting the trees where necessary, and facing the tomb in the proper direction. They went away, but later discovered that family Y had destroyed their “fung seui” by planting trees and digging a cess-pit near family X’s tomb. Family X moved their family grave to another local hill. For “revenge” a geomancer was hired to rechannel the stream spoiling family Y’s fortune, and the story of retaliation and escalation continued.³ Though we make light of such exchanges, the above events show how

³ Hugh Baker, Ancestral Images: A Hong Kong Album (Hong Kong: South China Morning Post Limited, 1979), 103-104. The story continues:

“Sure enough, the Y’s business began to suffer, and some of their children died. It took them eight years to realise [sic] that it might be the grave which was at fault, but they eventually got a geomancer who diagnosed the fault and showed how family X were responsible for the ill-luck.

Family Y secretly exhumed the bones from their grave, and reburied them several miles away. Now it was family X’s turn for misfortune - they kept giving birth to leprositic sons. Their geomancer discovered that the fault lay with their grave, but not the site itself, rather with evil influences which seemed to emanate from the Y grave on the other hill.

After much hesitation, the X family and their geomancer went stealthily to the Y grave and opened it on a dark misty night. They found the bones gone and the grave full of night-soil [feces] - the Y’s had had their revenge. so the X grave had to be moved too...”

significant “blessing” is and the extent to which many Chinese believe their lives are governed by it.

“Ex Opere Operato”

The intense concern with performing the correct actions, i.e. the way in which the tomb is layed out, centers on the conceptualization of blessing as a mechanism that is necessarily set into motion when practices are “correctly” performed. Very interestingly there is a strong parallel with the concept of “ex opere operato”, and as defined in the Book Of Concord, this term means “‘by the mere performance,’ or ‘by the outward act’”⁴ The heart and mind of the practitioner could be a thousand miles away from the activity being performed. Blessing will accrue just so long as the motions are accomplished.

This belief can actually benefit Chinese Christians. A missionary in Hong Kong and Mainland China for the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, told me of how one recently converted Christian girl was placed in the uncomfortable predicament of either participating in the family worship of their household idol at Chinese New Year, or being marked as an unfilial and thus an unloving daughter. When she came home the inevitable confrontation was very much in her thoughts and prayers. She knew that now as a Christian she could not do such a great sin against her newly found Savior. The confrontation took place when her mother told her to get the incense sticks and worship at the idol’s altar along with her siblings. Just at that heated moment she had an idea! “Let one of my siblings

⁴ Theodore G. Tappert, trans. & ed., The Book Of Concord: The Confessions Of The Evangelical Lutheran Church (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), page 115, footnote 8.

go up to the altar a second time in my place.” The mother thought this was a good idea (the “gods” tend not to be the brightest of beings and would never be the wiser). The brother would do twice what he was going to be doing in any event, and so the girl was allowed to go out the door not having harmed her conscience and having been able to keep her Christian witness.

In the mother’s thinking the so called “gods” would have been satisfied and the family’s blessing was “assured.” “Ex opere operato,” a focus on the mechanics of blessing, a place where the heart can be a million miles away, and an exercise that focuses on that which is obtained rather than on relationship with the one that gives.

The true blessing that we find in Job, as we will see, is a far different matter! In this paper on blessing as revealed to us in the book of Job I will examine the Hebrew words used there for blessing; the conveyor, content, cause, and purpose of blessing; Job’s theological shift; and finally the theology of blessing as revealed to us in the book of Job.

I thank God for His blessing to me of salvation through Jesus, Yahweh’s foremost blessing and the wellspring from which all other blessings flow. I give Him thanks for and acknowledge His blessing me through His faithful servants: the faculty of Concordia Seminary; the Board For Mission Services, LC-MS; the Pacific Southwest District, LC-MS; the brothers and sisters of Loving Savior Of The Hills Lutheran Church, Chino Hills, California; the brothers and sisters of Loving Savior Chinese Church, LC-MS, Chino Hills, California; my aunt Emma; my sister-in-law Desi and her family; my brother Tom and his family; and the

others who have aided me and prayed for the successful completion of this paper. I thank God for my father and mother-in-law, Deng BaBa and Deng MaMa; my sons David and Jonathan; and most of all for my “Jesus centered” wife, Hannah; all of whom God used to help make the writing of this paper possible. To God be the glory!

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CHAPTER 1

THE BOOK OF JOB AND THE WORDS FOR BLESSING

The Word Group בָּרַךְ /brk “Blessing” As Found In Job

The basic meaning of בָּרַךְ /brk in the Old Testament is *kneel, bless*¹, “to endue with power for success, prosperity, fecundity, longevity, etc”². It’s nuances also include the “concepts of greeting, congratulating, thanking, and praising.”³

Job contains the piel form of the verb, meaning *blees*:

...brk in the piel with people or things as object and people as subject seems always to be understood as a commendation or petition to God to grant success to the person being blessed. When God is the object, brk in the piel should always be rendered “praise” etc. When persons are the object, it can be translated “greet,” “congratulate,” “thank,” “extol,” but in most cases “bless,” depending on the context.⁴

¹ Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, Charles A. Briggs, A Hebrew And English Lexicon Of The Old Testament: With An Appendix Containing The Biblical Aramaic, trans. Edward Robinson (Oxford: At The Clarendon Press, 1907; reprinted with corrections, London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 138-139 (page references are to reprint edition).

² R. Laird Harris; Gleason L. Archer, Jr.; and Bruce K. Waltke; eds. Theological Wordbook Of The Old Testament (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), s.v. “בָּרַךְ (barak),” by John N. Oswalt. 132.

³ G. J. Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, eds. Theological Dictionary Of The Old Testament, trans. John T. Willis, revised ed., (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), s.v. “בָּרַךְ /brk,” by Josef Scharbert, vol.2, 303.

⁴ TDOT, s.v. “בָּרַךְ /brk,” vol.2, 293. (Scharbert here takes exception to some patriarchal blessings that seem to take on a life of their own; but even he sees the blessing as effective due to the patriarch’s relationship to God, cf. 289; contra Scharbert’s exception: Mitchell (Christopher Mitchell, The Meaning And Significance of BRK “To Bless” In The Old Testament [Ph.D diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1983], 337-339.)).

The piel usage is relational, meaning

to express solemn words that show the appreciation, gratitude, respect, joint relationship, or good will of the speaker, thus promoting respect for the one being blessed and, when a man is the object of *brk*, the wish that he might receive happiness, success, and increase of earthly possessions.⁵

God *blesses* and so confers abundant and effective life upon the latter part of Job's life, Job 42:12, and upon the work of Job's hands, Job 1:10.⁶ Further, people in gratitude *bless* people, such as Job was *blessed* for his beneficent activity to the needy, Job 31:20.⁷ Mitchell believes this thanksgiving benediction and Job 29:13 below are more desires that God according to His general laws of retribution would bless, rather than specific prayer requests.⁸

The piel *bless*, with the obvious contextually antithetical meaning of *curse*, is found four times in Job: Job's fear that his sons might have *blasphemed* God in their hearts, Job 1:5; the satan's challenge to God to take away all of Job's blessings and see if Job didn't *curse* God to His face, Job 1:11 & Job 2:5; and the bitter words of Job's wife: "Curse God and die!", Job 2:9, on which Mitchell comments:

Job's wife envisions death as the result of blasphemy in Job 2:9. She

⁵ TDOT, s.v. "בִּרְךְ /brk," vol.2, 293.

⁶ These examples of God blessing things and animals are relatively rare in the OT, but it is clear that benedictory powers are released on them due to God's blessing people. TDOT, s.v. "בִּרְךְ /brk," vol.2, 295, 308.

⁷ Psalm 103:22 & Job 31:20 are the only two OT examples of things blessing (God). *Heart* here clearly signifies the person who blesses. TDOT, s.v. "בִּרְךְ /brk," vol.2, 288., 293.

⁸ Mitchell, 211. cf. 327-328.

tells Job, 'Blaspheme God and die!'... If Job would completely repudiate God, then God would quickly finish Job off, and such a death would be better than a protracted painful illness...⁹

The pual form of בָּרַךְ /brk is passive of the piel, meaning *to be blessed, adored, extolled, praised*. Job, despite dreadful occurrences, makes this doxological statement of faith in Job 1:21. יְהוָה שֵׁם יְהוָה מְבֹרָךְ, "may the name of the LORD be praised." This מְבֹרָךְ /meborak formula, an optative call for praise to God independent of Divine benefits received, is Job's sacrifice of praise, deserved by God and founded solely upon God's revealed and innate goodness of character.¹⁰

Again, בָּרַךְ /brk is relational, showing...

...a manifestation of solidarity, an acknowledgment of communion with the one who is named as the object. This is also to be noted in texts where God is the object, whose intention is not to show the subservience of the creature and the sovereignty of God, but to express gratitude and the grateful manifestation for the intimate relationship with the God of Israel.

This is also the case when God is the subject and people and things are objects of the blessing.¹¹

The feminine cognate noun בְּרָכָה /brkh, *blessing*, found in Job 29:13, points both to the benedictory words and to the benedictory powers released by them.¹² This blessing, given by the destitute in recognition of benefits received, was a thankful, joyful (cf. 29:13b; אָרַן /arnin: *I caused to sing for joy.*), prayerful

⁹ Mitchell, 318.

¹⁰ Mitchell, 281, 307, 312-313, 332.

¹¹ TDOT, s.v. "בָּרַךְ /brk," vol.2, 293-294.

¹² TDOT, s.v. "בָּרַךְ /brk," vol.2, 297-298.

commendation to God to recognize and release upon Job His own beneficial powers that bring advantage and prosperity.

The LXX/Septuagint almost consistently translates בָּרַךְ /brk with a form of εὐλογέω, meaning *speak well of, praise, bless*. Exceptions in Job include Job 1:5 and 2:9, where the LXX translator(s) provide(s) the contextually appropriate translations.

In the OT the only source of true blessing is God. Rather than being an evolutionistic theology “rooted in magical thought”¹³, from Genesis to 2 Chronicles בָּרַךְ /brk focuses on relationship with God:

In the OT the blessing is almost always attributed to God or closely connected to him. The godly man knew that the only kind of benedictory wishes he could utter were those which God alone could bring to reality. Since a blessing can be brought to reality by God alone, and since it denotes an attachment with or a strengthening of solidarity, it is necessary that the person uttering the blessing be in fellowship with God, seek it, or be worthy of it. Therefore, the blessing (like the curse) is revocable, and can be changed into a curse.¹⁴

Blessing is inseparable from God. It is not an independent system that can be given, maintained, or distributed apart from Yahweh’s active involvement.¹⁵

Such blessings as fertility, dominion, and prosperity are merely the peripheral small change of this essential element:

The factor that makes a blessing a blessing is the relationship between God and the person blessed. God blesses because of his favorable attitude toward a person or group of people. A blessing is any benefit or

¹³ IDOT, s.v. “בָּרַךְ /brk,” vol.2, 303. cf. Mitchell, p.335.-339

¹⁴ IDOT, s.v. “בָּרַךְ /brk,” vol.2, 303.

¹⁵ Mitchell, 330.

utterance which God freely bestows in order to make known to the recipient and to others that he is favorably disposed toward the recipient. The type of benefit God actually bestows when he blesses is actually of secondary importance.¹⁶

The Word Group אָשַׁר/asr

The basic meaning of אָשַׁר/asr is *go straight, go on, advance*.¹⁷ The verb, occurring only once in Job, and that in the Piel case, means *pronounce happy, call blessed, speak well of* (Job 29:11): אֲשַׁרְנִי וְהִיאָשַׁרְנִי; “Whoever heard me spoke well of me....”

What is the relationship between אָשַׁר/asr and בָּרַךְ/brk? Whenever God blesses someone or something, or when man blesses God, בָּרַךְ/brk alone is used. Again, when the focus is on God’s gracious initiative or a benediction, בָּרַךְ/brk is used. The usage of אָשַׁר/asr, however, is more descriptive and congratulatory in nature.¹⁸

The masculine cognate noun אָשַׁר or אָשַׁר/asr, appears only in the plural construct form, אָשַׁרִי/asre, meaning *happiness, blessedness*¹⁹: It is found in Job 5:17: אֲשַׁרְנִי וְהִיאָשַׁרְנִי; “Blessed is the man whom God corrects....” This blessing/happiness from God provides descriptive terminology of what

¹⁶ Mitchell, 322.

¹⁷ BDB, s.v. “אָשַׁר/asr”, 80-81.

¹⁸ R. Laird Harris; Gleason L. Archer, Jr.; and Bruce K. Waltke; eds. Theological Wordbook Of The Old Testament (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), s.v. “אָשַׁר (asr)”, by Victor P. Hamilton. 80.

¹⁹ BDB, s.v. “אָשַׁר/asr”, 80-81.

accrues to the person who lives out covenantal faithfulness to God through his/her deeds and is blessed (בָּרֻךְ/baruk) of God: something must be done for אֲשֶׁרִי/asre to be put into effect.

Mitchell points out that the אֲשֶׁרִי/asre formula has three Scriptural uses, namely, to:

1) declare that a person already possess[es] blessings...2) declare that person will be blessed in the future...and 3) express declarative praise of the pious, usually an abstract ideal person rather than an actual person; a description of the pious person's present and future blessings is often part of the praise...The third use is the most common.²⁰

אֲשֶׁרִי/asre is the closest synonym of the various בָּרַךְ /brk forms, with בָּרֻךְ/baruk being able to be used in each of Mitchell's above cited three manners; but, בָּרֻךְ/baruk also covers a far wider spread of meanings and usages. אֲשֶׁרִי/asre is limited to declarative statements about people; בָּרֻךְ/baruk is used in optative as well as declarative descriptions of people, objects, abstract qualities, and of God. אֲשֶׁרִי/asre is primarily found in wisdom literature, בָּרֻךְ/baruk all over the OT. Some have posited that אֲשֶׁרִי/asre may be differentiated from בָּרַךְ /brk even further by its denoting "envious desire"²¹ (Janzen, Hamilton), but Mitchell demonstrates this theory's lack of Biblical support and how בָּרֻךְ/baruk is too used in envious encounters.²²

²⁰ Mitchell, 354.

²¹ TWOT, s.v. "אֲשֶׁרִי (asr)," 80.

²² Mitchell, 355-356.

In Job 29:11 and 5:17 the LXX translates אֲשֶׁר/asr with μακαρίζω/makarizo, *bless, deem or pronounce happy, congratulate*²³ and μακάριος/makarios, *blessed, happy, prosperous*²⁴ and in the New Testament era, *blessed, fortunate, happy*, usually in the sense of a *privileged recipient of divine favor*²⁵. The meaning of this Greek word group thus basically parallels its Hebrew counterpart.

אֲשֶׁר/asre, as בָּרַךְ/brk, is a relational term:

[It is] proclamation of the relationship between God and man in the living covenant of grace...which was created by grace; this applies also to the *makarism* that is so often related to the Torah." [Kaser] It has to do with life in the sphere of the Torah.²⁶

Due to the association of אֲשֶׁר/asre to בָּרַךְ/brk, we comprehend that this *blessing/happiness* also comes not due to mechanisms or magic, but rather through grace one's living in relationship with the true God, and then in sanctification living out one's relationship with the Almighty.

The Noun סוּד/swd

²³ Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, revised and augmented by Henry S. Jones, 9th ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), s.v. "μακαρίζω/makarizo", 1073.

²⁴ Liddell and Scott, s.v. "μακάριος, α, ον/makarios, a, on", 1073-1074.

²⁵ William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon Of The New Testament And Other Early Christian Literature: A translation and adaptation of the fourth revised and augmented edition of Walter Bauer's Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der übrigen urchristlichen Literatur. Revised and augmented by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker from Walter Bauer's fifth edition, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), s.v. "μακάριος, ία, ιον/makarios, ia, ion", 486.

²⁶ G. J. Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, eds. Theological Dictionary Of The Old Testament, trans. John T. Willis, revised ed., (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), s.v. "אֲשֶׁר/asre," by Henri Cazelles, vol.1, 448.

In Job 29:4 : אֶלֶּי אֵלֹהִים בְּסוֹד NIV translates “when God’s intimate friendship blessed my house.” The NIV, with the NASB, TEV, NRSV, NKJ, and CEV, all understand בְּסוֹד/b^eswd as the preposition בְּ/b^e and the masculine singular noun (construct form) סוֹד/sod; denoting the *confidential speech*,²⁷ *council* and *counsel*, “taken by those in familiar conversation”²⁸ in the intimacy with which God deals with those who fear Him and are upright.

The LXX translation is similar in the sense of intimacy with God: ὅτε ὁ θεὸς ἐπισκοπήν ἐποίητο τοῦ οἴκου μου/*When God watched over my house*. ἐπισκοπή/episkope means *watching over*²⁹, *a visitation*, and is used of divine demonstrations of power, primarily with positive nuances.³⁰

Rather than being based upon an actual word, the NIV’s use of *blessed* is a liberty in translation bringing out the significance behind Job’s words. God had been clearly an intimate in Job’s home, providing Job with ongoing counsel as well as protection. God provided his trusted servant Job with the epitome of all blessings: His own presence.

²⁷ R. Laird Harris; Gleason L. Archer, Jr.; and Bruce K. Waltke; eds. Theological Wordbook Of The Old Testament (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), s.v. “סוֹד/swd,” 619.

²⁸ BDB, s.v. “סוֹד/swd”, 691.

²⁹ Liddell and Scott, s.v. “ἐπισκοπή, -ια, ἡ/episkope, ia, he”, 657.

³⁰ BAGD, “ἐπισκοπή, ης, ἡ/episkope, ia, he”, 299.

CHAPTER 2

THE THEOLOGY OF BLESSING EXPLORED

This paper will use the definition of blessing used by Job himself :

גַּם אֶת־הַטּוֹב נִקְבַּל מֵאֵת הָאֱלֹהִים וְאֶת־הָרָע לֹא נִקְבַּל
"Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?" (Job 2:10) The simplest Biblical definition of blessing is *the good that we receive from God*, that which is conducive to our happiness and welfare. We will now systematically examine the book of Job in this light.

The Conveyor of Blessing

God

In the book of Job Yahweh is clearly the author of blessing. Job 1:1-5 is interpreted in the light of 1:9-10, to show that all Job's blessings of the prologue were indeed from God Himself, and not simply happenstance:

וַיַּעַן הַשָּׂטָן אֶת־יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר הַחֲנֹם יָרָא אֱלֹהִים:
הֲלֹא־אֵת אֶתְּהָ שִׁכְתָּ בְּעֵדוֹ וּבְעֵד־בֵּיתוֹ וּבְעֵד כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ
מִסְבִּיב מֵעֲשֵׂה יָדָיו בְּרִכְתָּ וּמִקְנָהוּ פָּרִץ בְּאֶרֶץ:

9 "Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied 10 "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land."

Job 1:21 makes it clear that the power to give (as well as to take away) is

in God's hands alone, there is not the recognition of another.

וַיֹּאמֶר עָרֹם יָצֵאתִי מִבֶּטֶן אִמִּי וְעָרֹם אָשׁוּב שָׁמָּה
יְהוָה נָתַן וַיְהוָה לָקַח יְהי שֵׁם יְהוָה מְבֹרָךְ:

*"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart.
The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away;
may the name of the LORD be praised."*

Job 2:10 points to God as the One who gives good: *"Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?"*

The great problem of the wicked, according to Eliphaz in his third speech, is that they don't understand that it is *God* who gave them their blessings. They even show Him contempt, 22:17-18:

הָאֹמְרִים לֹאֵל סוּר מִמֶּנּוּ וּמִה־יִפְעַל שְׂדֵי לְמוֹ:
וְהוּא מִלֵּא בְתֵיחֵם טוֹב וְעֵצַת רְשָׁעִים רַחֲקָה מִנִּי:

*They said to God, 'Leave us alone!
What can the Almighty do to us?'
Yet it was he who filled their houses with good things,
so I stand aloof from the counsel of the wicked.*

Elihu also speaks of God's blessings to the sinner, given even two or three times over; 33:23-30, especially 29.

Man

People can also be agents of blessing. One may bless God, 1:21:

יְהי שֵׁם יְהוָה מְבֹרָךְ: "...*may the name of the LORD be praised.*" Some scholars (i.e. Mowinkel and Blank) in disregard of polysemy (one word having multiple meanings; i.e., legitimate multiple meanings for the same verb when there is an interchange of the object and subject) have declared that man in

blessing God gives Him some benefit.¹ In view of this position, Mitchell states:

It is true that man praising God is the counterpart to God blessing man. It is man's duty to praise God in return for what God has done for man. But man gives praise to God in lieu of materially benefiting God. It is hardly possible for man to increase God's power. Man can only give God the worship, praise, and thanks he deserves and desires.²

Man indeed acts as the conveyor of *blessing* to God, but the blessing is *praise*.

In Job 29:12-13 is found the invocation of blessings that welled up within the hearts of those grateful people who were recipients of Job's benevolent actions.

כִּי־אִמְלֹט עֲנִי מִשׁוּעַ וַיְחֹם וְלֹא־עֶזֶר לוֹ:
בְּרַכַּת אֲבִד עָלַי קָבָא וְלֵב אֶלְמָנָה אֶרְנֵן:

*...because I rescued the poor who cried for help,
and the fatherless who had none to assist him.
The man who was dying blessed me;
I made the widow's heart sing.*

Hartley states that Job

reached out to the deepest needs of those who were forlorn and thereby restored their sense of worth. The fundamental spiritual law, that in giving one receives, was evident in Job's life. He gave joy and received blessing.³

The efficient cause of person to person blessing was Yahweh, to whom the praiseworthy person was recommended for special recognition.

¹ Mitchell, 333-334.

² Mitchell, 334-335.

³ John E. Hartley, The New International Commentary On The Old Testament, The Book Of Job (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), p.391.

Something Else

Job 31:19-20 contains a blessing similar in nature to Job 29:13 above:

אִם־אֶרְאֶה אֹבֵד מִבְּלִי לְבוּשׁ וְאֵין כְּסוּת לְאֶבְיוֹן:
אִם־לֹא בִּרְכוּנִי חֶלְצוֹ וּמִגִּזּוֹ כְּבָשִׂי יִתְחַמֵּם:

*if I have seen anyone perishing for lack of clothing,
or a needy man without a garment,
and his heart did not bless me
for warming him with the fleece from my sheep...*

This blessing is in response to Job's loving care for the poor, represented by Job's providing his own garment.⁴ Job 31:24 and Psalm 103:20 ff. are both rather unique in that something other than God or man does the blessing. The passage above states that the needy man's *loins* (*heart* NIV) bless Job, "but clearly the term represents the man himself".⁵

The Content Of The Blessing

This section will examine sequentially and according to author the substance of the blessings as they are recorded in the book of Job.

Prologue

The prologue is a declaration of Job as the fulfillment of the upright, blameless, fearer of God pictured in Scripture's wisdom literature. The result is abundant blessing from God. Offspring: 1) sons and daughters, 2) numerically whole: "*seven sons and three daughters*", 1:2. Wealth of property, animals: 1)

⁴ Mitchell, 222.

⁵ Mitchell, 222.

“seven thousand sheep”, 2) “three thousand camels”, 3) “five hundred yoke of oxen” and 4) “five hundred donkeys”, 1:3. Wealth of property, servants: “a large number of servants”, 1:3. Status, above peers: the “greatest man among all the people of the east”, 1:3. Children, materially affluent: “His sons used to take turns holding feasts in their homes”, 1:4. Children, siblings mutually benevolent: 1) “His sons used to take turns holding feasts in their homes”, 2) “they would invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them”, 1:4. Children, follow father’s faith: 1) “Job would send and have them purified” (familial purification ceremony), 2) “This was Job’s regular custom” (an ongoing family faith), 1:5. Protection, hedge: 1) “Have You not put a hedge around him...”, 2) “...and his household...”, 3) “...and everything he has?”, 1:10a. Wealth of property, agricultural success: “You have blessed the work of his hands” (יְדֵיָּו מְעֵשֶׂה work of his hands, a common Deuteronomic expression denoting agriculture)⁶. Wealth of property, fertility of animals : , “...so that [1] his flocks and [2] herds are spread throughout the land.” 1:10b. Protection, limitation of the satan’s sphere of activity: “...everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger.”, 1:12. Protection, limitation of the satan’s sphere of activity: “...he is in your hands; but you must spare his life.” 2:6. Good things: “Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?”, 2:10.

Job

⁶ Mitchell, 144.

The Speeches

Afterlife, joy in the : 6:8-10. Job resolves himself to think that the only way to enjoy the blessing of joy is to escape God's heavy hand on earth and thereby retaining a good conscience before God," then" in the afterlife he would have the joy of knowing this. God's creation of Job: 10:8-11. God's gifts of life, kindness, and providential care: "*You gave me life and showed me kindness, and in your providence watched over my spirit.*", 10:12. Afterlife, opportunity for defense: 13:15. Even though he be slayed by God, Job's hope implicitly foresees the afterlife in which he will see YHWH face to face and where Job will be able to accomplish righting the perceived wrong. Afterlife, rising after heavens are no more: 14:11-12. Afterlife, 1) resurrection hope, 2) providential oversight, 3) Divine overlooking of sins: 14:13-17. Heavenly Mediator, will plead on his behalf before God: 1) witness, 2) advocate, 3) intercessor, 4) friend, 16:18-21. Grow stronger: "*those with clean hands*", 17:9. Redeemer/Defender: 19:24. Job's hope is a future Redeemer who will cause a time and history reversal of Job's condition, to be done in front of his friends. Afterlife, physical resurrection: 19:26a. Afterlife, beatific vision of God: 19:26b-27. Victory over enemies, judgment by the Almighty: 19:28-29. Blessings of God to the wicked: 1) long life, 2) increasing in power, 3) seeing their children established around them, 4) homes are safe and free from fear, 5) the rod of God is not upon them, 6) bulls never fail to breed, 7) cows calve and do not miscarry, 8) send forth their children as a flock, 9) their little ones dance about, 10) they sing to the music of tambourine and harp, 11)

they make merry to the sound of the flute, 12) spend their years in prosperity, 13) go down to the Sheol in peace, 14) prosperity; 21:7-16. Blessings of God to the wicked, "*their prosperity is not in their own hands*": 21:16. Blessings of God to some people: 1) "*dying in full vigor, being completely secure and at ease*", Job 21:23; 2) "*body well nourished bones rich with marrow*", 21:24 ; 3) enjoying the good things, 21:25. Blessings of God to the wicked: 1) spared from the day of calamity, 21:30; delivered from the day of wrath, 21:30; 2) no one denounces his conduct to his face, 21:31; 3) no one repays him for what he has done, 21:31; 4) carried to the grave, 21:32 ; 5) watch is kept over his tomb, 21:32 ; 6) the soil in the valley is sweet to him (i.e. he dies in peace), 21:33. Blessings of God to the wicked: 1) mighty, 24:22a; 2) become established, 24:22b; 3) are exalted, 24:24a. The godless exclude themselves from God's blessings: 1) hope at death, 27:8; 2) God listens to cry when distress comes, 27:9; 3) finds delight in the Almighty, 27:10a; 4) can call upon God at all times, 27:10b; 4) many children with long lives, 27:14a; 5) offspring have enough to eat, 27:14b; 6) survival of offspring from plague, 27:15a; 7) sadness at one's death, 27:15b; 8) possession and retention of much clothes and silver, 27:16; 9) suitable dwelling place, 27:18; 10) possession and retention of wealth, 27:19; 11) freedom from terror, 27:20a; 12) stability, 27:20b-23.

The Monologues

In Job's first monologue, 29:1-25, he recounts his pre-turmoil blessed state. It should be noted that the first mentioned blessing is that of sweet

communion with God. God's watching over, 29:2; God's light and guidance, 29:3; God's intimate friendship, 29:4; presence of God, 29:5a; presence of parents' children, 29:5b; abundant cream and olive oil (rich affluent life), 29:6; position of honor, 29:7; respect from young, old, chief men, and nobles; 29:8-10; good reputation, 29:11; the blessing of the destitute, 29:13; death in own house, 29:18a; long life, 29:18b; abundant spiritual and material blessings to weather adversity⁷, 29:19; vigorous life physically and emotionally⁸, 29:20; greatly respected as counselor, chief, and comforter; 29:21-25.

The Friends

Eliphaz

Eliphaz gives a catalogue of God's blessings, 5:8-27. Rain, 5:10; care for the lowly and the mourning: 5:11; thwarting of the crafty, 5:12-14; needy are saved and given justice, 5:15-16; God's correction, 5:17; He heals what in discipline He has broken, 5:18; rescue from calamities in general, 5:19; rescue in famine and in war, 5:20; protection from the tongue's lash, 5:21a; no fear when destruction comes, 5:21b; laugh at destruction and famine, 5:22a; need not fear the beasts of the earth, 5:22b; peace with the forces of nature (drought, wild animals, stones), 5:23; security (secure tent): 5:24a; no losses of stock and property, 5:24b; multitude of offspring (like grass of the earth), 5:25; timely death while yet in full vigor, 5:26.

⁷ Hartley, 393.

⁸ Hartley, 393.

In another speech Eliphaz states further blessings: God gives gracious blessing to the wicked (filling their houses with good things), 22:18; the blessed see enemies ruined and will rejoice, 22:19a; innocent mock enemies, 22:19b; enemies destroyed, 22:20a; fire devours enemies' wealth, 22:20b.

In Job 22:21-30 he tells us God's blessings to the repentant: peace: 22:21a; prosperity: 22:21b; restoration: 22:23; God, the greatest reward: "*the Almighty will be your gold, the choicest silver for you.*" 22:25; delight in the Almighty: 22:26a; will lift up your face to God, 22:26b; heard prayer: 22:27a; fulfilled vows to God, 22:27b; success in decisions, 22:28a; light will shine on your ways, 22:28b; God's answering one's intercessory prayers, 22:29-30.

Bildad

God has special blessings for the repentant, Job 8:5-7: even now He will rouse Himself on your behalf, 8:6a; He will restore you to your rightful place, 8:6b; prosperous future, 8:7.

God has blessings for the blameless, 8:20-22: acceptance by God, 8:20a; strengthening of one's hands, 8:20b; laughter and joy, 8:21; enemies shamed and eliminated, 8:22.

Zophar

Zophar also describes God's blessings to the repentant, Job 11:13-19: will lift up face without shame, 11:15a; stand firm without fear, 11:15b; troubles will be forgotten, 11:16; life will be brighter than noonday, 11:17a; darkness will become like morning, 11:17b; security in hope, 11:18b; rest in safety, 11:18b; no

fear, 11:19a; people court one's favor, 11:19b.

Elihu

God gives blessings to the sinner, Job 33:23-31: a messenger from God to provide guidance and intercession and ransom, 33:23-24; renewal and restoration of one's flesh, 33:25; in prayer finds favor with God, 33:26a; joy in seeing God's face, 33:26b; restoration by God to righteous state, 33:26c; mercy instead of justice, 33:27; redemption from the grave, 33:28a; live to enjoy the light, 33:28b; all these blessings given two to three times over, 33:29; light of life shines on the person, 33:30.

Elihu cites blessings that often go unnoticed by people in the grip of turmoil, Job 35:9-11: "*God my Maker, who gives songs in the night*", 35:10; God teaches us and makes us wise, 35:11;

God also gives justice and mercy, Job 36:6-11; 15-16. Justice: He does not keep the wicked alive, 36:6a; He gives the afflicted their rights, Job 36:6b; God's eyes are continually on the righteous, 36:7a; He enthrones them with kings, 36:7b; He exalts them forever, 36:7c; God's correction of the erring: 1) tells them what they have done, 36:9; 2) He makes them listen to correction, 36:10a; 3) He commands them to repent of their evil, 36:10b; obedient spend rest of days in prosperity, 33:11c; obedient spend rest of days in contentment, 36:11. Deliverance sought by God for the sufferers (of sin's consequences): "those who suffer He delivers in their suffering", 36:15a; He speaks to them in their affliction, 36:15b; He woos them from the jaws of distress, 35:16a; God woos to a spacious place free from restriction, 36:16b; He woos to the comfort of

a table laden with choice food, 36:16c.

God blesses through the means of showers and the implementation of the hydro-cycle, 36:27-31: abundant showers fall on mankind, 36:28; He governs (or nourishes) the nations, 36:31a; and provides food in abundance, 36:31b.

He sends showers of blessing, Job 37:13: "*He brings the clouds... to water His earth {or to favor them} and show his love.*", 37:13.

God also has "*regard for all the wise in heart*", 37:24.

God's Monologue

God, in Job 38:1-40:2 speaks of the blessings found in creation and in the theatre of the general revelation of God: the natural wonders, the provision of rain for the fields, and food for the animals, etc., all showing the blessing of God poured out in exceeding abundance upon His creation.

Epilogue

Job's final chapter contains these manifestations of God's blessing: enemies put down by God's expressed anger: "*I am angry with you and your two friends*", 42:7a; recognition of favor before others: "*You have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.*", 42:7b & 42:8b; enemies come for intercession, 42:8a; public acceptance of prayer, 42:8b & 9; God's mercy instead of justice: "*not deal with you according to your folly*", 42:8c; made prosperous, 42:10a; prosperity, given twice as much: 42:10b; reestablishment of all family and friend relationships: 42:11; comfort and consolation of family and friends: 42:11b;

prosperity, gifts from family and friends: *“and each one gave him a piece of silver and a gold ring”*, 42:11c; prosperity, material possessions in the form of twice as many animals as previously: Job 42:12; offspring, sons and daughters: 42:13-14. In this last example of blessing the original number of children born is exactly the same that died in the prologue. On the meaning Mitchell insightfully comments:

The most likely reason that the second set of children was not doubled in number is that the first set was not considered altogether lost for Job (2 Sam 12:23, Keil and Delitzsch Job 2.390). This is the only passage in the Bible where daughters are specified as the result of God’s blessing.⁹

Offspring, beautiful daughters: *“Nowhere in all the land were there found women as beautiful as Job’s daughters”*, Job 42:15a; prosperity, abundance of possessions enough to give inheritance to the daughters as well as to the sons, 42:15b; old age, *“After this, Job lived a hundred and forty years... And so he died, old and full of years.”*, 42:16a & 17; children, being able to see children’s offspring: *“...he saw his children and their children to the fourth generation.”*, 42:16b.

The Causative Element Of The Blessing

Prologue

One’s righteousness, Job 1:1, is a causative agent in blessing. Job, who personally acknowledged one’s ability only on the basis of grace to stand before God, is pictured in the prologue as

an example of the fulfillment of the wisdom aphorisms... Job is blameless and upright, and fears God (v.1). Consequently, he enjoys

⁹ Mitchell, p.382.

abundant blessings from God.”¹⁰

Job 1:1 reads: *הָאִישׁ הַהוּא תָם וְיָשָׁר וְיָרָא אֱלֹהִים וְסָר מִרָע׃*, “*This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil.*”

Mediatorship and sacrifice for sins, Job 1:5, is also a cause. Job’s offerings for the children, further demonstrating his faithfulness to God, also indicate the cause for God bringing forgiveness of sins and the continuance of blessing on Job and his household: Job’s activity as mediator and the role of sacrifices (both themes revisited in the epilogue, 42:7-10).¹¹

When a period of feasting had run its course, Job would send and have them purified. Early in the morning he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, thinking, ‘Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.’ This was Job’s regular custom.

God’s grace is the causative agent of blessing: Job 1:9. The satan’s accusation, “‘Does *Job fear God for nothing?*’”, declared the foundation of Job’s relationship to God as founded upon spiritual opportunism. As the trial unfolds, the cause of God’s blessing Job ironically is shown indeed to be “*for nothing*”, being based upon God’s grace and not on man’s works.

Job

The Speeches

Though accepting Bildad’s chapter eight statement (one’s standing is causative of Divine blessing), Job recognized the impossibility of 100%

¹⁰ Mitchell, p. 145.

¹¹ Norman C. Habel, The Old Testament Library, The Book Of Job Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985), p.28.

righteousness before God. Job has done all that a righteous man can do, including receiving God's grace, and yet even this is unable warrant blessing alone from God:

*"Indeed, I know that this is true.
But how can a mortal be righteous before God?
Though one wished to dispute with him,
he could not answer him one time out of a thousand."* 9:2-3.

God's grace alone causes blessing to those in open rebellion against God in Job 12:6:

*The tents of marauders are undisturbed,
and those who provoke God are secure--
those who carry their god in their hands.
{Or secure in what God's hand brings them}*

Job 17:9 states: *"those with clean hands will grow stronger."*

The wicked do not have ultimate control of their prosperity, 21:16.

In response to Eliphaz' *"Submit to God...and prosperity will come..."*, 22:21, Job states that he was and is righteous. His lack of blessing is due to testing, not due to God's punitive or remedial activity, Job 23:10-11.¹²

Exceptions often exist to the tit-for-tat blessing/cursing theology proposed by the friends. In chapter 24, Job cannot fathom why God does not judge the wicked (v.1), who perform injustices against the very ones who should be the special recipients of God's mercy and blessing, i.e. those who know God, 24:1; the orphan and the widow, 24:3; the needy, the poor and their children, 24:5, cf.24:21; the dying and the wounded, 24:12.; but *"God charges no one with*

¹² Robert G. Hoeber, gen. ed.; Horace D. Hummel; Walter R. Roehrs; Dean O. Wenthe, assoc. eds., Concordia Self-Study Bible: New International Version (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986), 758.

wrong doing", 24:12.

God is silent and indifferent (vv. 1, 12) in the face of such misery, but the fact that God waits disproves the counselors' theory of suffering. Job is no more out of God's favor as one of the victims than the criminal in vv. 13-17 is in God's favor because of God's inaction.¹³

God's blessing of justice will occur, but its causation is to be found in God's timetable, 24:18-25, when He brings about the great reversal.

The godless exclude themselves from the Source of blessing, 27:8-10. The blessings enjoyed by such people will be snatched away according to "*the fate God allots to the wicked*", 27:11-23.

The righteous and innocent will receive the wicked's blessings, 27:16-17.

The Interlude: Job 28

God's wisdom alone is the answer to the mystery of why the good suffer and the wicked prosper, 28:1-27. God desires His people to remain faithful regardless of circumstances and He will actualize His true theology of blessings:

*"And he said to man,
`The fear of the Lord--that is wisdom,
and to shun evil is understanding.'" 28:28.*

Job's First Monologue

Man's blessing of another is the direct result of gratefulness for benevolent activity toward the poor/orphaned, 29:12; the destitute/ widowed, 29:13; and the perishing/needful of clothing, 31:19-20; etc..

The shattering of Job's original theory of causation is evidenced in 30:25-26, where he bemoans the apparent theological inconsistency:

¹³ CSSB, 758.

*Have I not wept for those in trouble?
Has not my soul grieved for the poor?
Yet when I hoped for good, evil came;
when I looked for light, then came darkness.*

The Friends

Eliphaz

In Eliphaz' first speech piety, blamelessness, innocence, and uprightness are crucial causal elements in his theology of retribution, 4:6-8:

*Should not your piety be your confidence
and your blameless ways your hope?
"Consider now: Who, being innocent, has ever perished?
Where were the upright ever destroyed?
As I have observed, those who plow evil
and those who sow trouble reap it.*

In Job 5:8-27, repentance and petition (v.8), humility (v.11), and acceptance of God's correction (v.17)¹⁴ facilitate God's blessings of fellowship.

In Eliphaz's third speech he states that ultimately one's righteousness does not affect God or obligate His blessing, Job 22:2-4:

*"Can a man be of benefit to God?
Can even a wise man benefit him?
What pleasure would it give the Almighty if you were righteous?
What would he gain if your ways were blameless?
"Is it for your piety that He rebukes you
and brings charges against you?*

Eliphaz's odd reasoning is as follows: since all things have their origin in God, man's giving back what God has given him does not enhance God in any way. Indeed, God is indifferent to man's goodness, because goodness is expected of him. It is when man becomes wicked that God is aroused (v.4).¹⁵

¹⁴ CSSB, 739.

¹⁵ CSSB, 756.

Indeed, God blesses even the openly contemptuous of Himself, therefore blessing ultimately occurs on the basis of grace, 22:17-18.

Righteousness and innocence provide for the blessing seeing enemies destroyed, 22:19-20; submission to God brings peace and prosperity, 22:21; teachableness before God, 22:22a; inwardly digesting God's Word, 22:22b; returning to God, 22:23a; removal of wickedness, 22:23b; singleness of mind for God, 22:24 (*"then the Almighty will be your gold, the choicest silver for you"*, 22:25) are all causal elements of blessing.

Bildad

Bildad, in Job 8, says that the way of repentance and uprightness will cause God to look favorably on Job: looking to God, Job 8:5a; pleading with the Almighty, 8:5b; purity and uprightness, 8:6a; result in the the promise: *"..even now He will rouse Himself on your behalf and restore you to your rightful place,"* 8:6b.

Zophar

In Job 11, Zophar states repentance is the way to blessing: *"devote your heart to Him,"* 11:13a; *"stretch out your hands to Him,"* 11:13b; *"put away the sin that is in your hand,"* 11:14a; *"allow no evil to dwell in your tent,"* 11:14b.

Elihu

In 34:9 Elihu rebuts Job's 9:29-31 statement: *"For he says, 'It profits a man nothing when he tries to please God.'"*; i.e. God is capricious in His

distribution of blessing. Elihu in 34:10 ff. proclaims God's faithfulness: God does no wrong, 34:10; *"He repays a man for what he has done; He brings upon him what his conduct deserves,"* 34:11; God does no injustice, 34:12; God knows with totality: *"His eyes are on the ways of men; He sees their every step. There is no dark place, no deep shadow, where evildoers can hide,"* 21-22; an unrepentant sinner cannot expect God's unconditional blessing: *"Should God then reward you on your terms, when you refuse to repent?"*, 33a.

People in reality have no right of demand on the grace and blessing of God, for we have nothing to bring to God that is not already His; nothing to perform that can in reality affect Him either negatively or positively, 35:3-8; the blessings of God in response to the plea of the oppressed are often unappreciated, 35:9-11; *"God gives the afflicted their rights"*, 36:6; the righteous are blessed with exaltation, 36:7; repentance, obedience, and service to God reap His blessing of prosperity and contentment, 36:8-12; the sufferer He delivers, 36:15; and the wise are regarded by God: *"does He not have regard for all the wise in heart?"*, 37:24.

God

God in His second speech states that He cannot be obligated by people to bless, *"Who has a claim against me that I must pay? Everything under heaven belongs to Me,"* 41:11.

The Prose Epilogue: Job 42:7 - 17

God in grace provided directions, the fulfillment of which would provide a

blessing causal element: appropriation of the sacrificial animals: *"Take seven bulls and seven rams,"* 42:8a; visit the God appointed patriarch/priest/intercessor: *"go to my servant Job,"* 42:8b; perform sacrifice: *"sacrifice a burnt offering for yourselves,"* 42:8c; ministry of the intercessor who stands in special relationship to Yahweh: *"My servant Job will pray for you,"* 42:8d. The promised blessings are clear: *"I will accept his prayer,"* 42:8e; and, *"not deal with you according to your folly,"* 42:8f. Obedience to God's command is included: *"[They] did what the LORD told them,"* 42:9a. Resultant was the promised blessing: *"and the LORD accepted Job's prayer,"* 9b. Job's blessing of restoration, founded on grace, is connected to God's inclusion of him in the forgiveness/healing process: *"After Job had prayed for his friends, the LORD made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had before,"* 42:10.

The Stated Purpose Of Blessing

The Friends

Eliphaz

In Eliphaz' first speech he says one purpose of blessing is to establish hope and eliminate injustice for the needy, 5: 15-16

*He saves the needy from the sword in their [oppressors'] mouth;
He saves them from the clutches of the powerful.
So the poor have hope,
and injustice shuts its mouth.*

God's purpose for blessing is found in His corrective intervention into people's

lives, which is itself a blessing as well as being the intermediary step for the further blessing of healing, 5:17-18:

*Blessed is the man whom God corrects;
so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty.
For he wounds, but he also binds up;
he injures, but his hands also heal.*

Bildad

Blessing is God's reward for true repentance and as such is also God's instrument of encouragement to create hope , 8:5-6:

*But if you will look to God
and plead with the Almighty,
if you are pure and upright,
even now He will rouse himself on your behalf
and restore you to your rightful place.*

Zophar

Zophar likewise indicates that blessing will follow upon repentance as God's reward, 11:13-14:

*Yet if you devote your heart to Him
and stretch out your hands to Him,
if you put away the sin that is in your hand
and allow no evil to dwell in your tent,
[...you will receive these good things from the Lord].*

Elihu

Elihu, after enumerating God's disciplinary work and then the blessing of Divine intervention into a sinner's life, states that God's purpose is salvation, 33:29-30:

*God does all these things to a man--
twice, even three times--
to turn back his soul from the pit,
{Or turn him back from the grave}
that the light of life may shine on him.*

God blesses people by speaking to them in their afflictions, having the objective of bringing them to deliverance, 36:16:

*He is wooing you from the jaws of distress
to a spacious place free from restriction,
to the comfort of your table laden with choice food.*

God's purpose in the blessing of abundant showers, given through His implementation of the hydro cycle, is for His further blessings of judging and governing¹⁶ and providing food in abundance for the nations, 36:27-31.

He sends forth His blessing of rain clouds to show love/kindness/grace (חֶסֶד/*hesed*) and possibly also to show favor/grace¹⁷; *"He brings the clouds to punish men, or to water his earth [Or to favor them] and show His love., " 37:13 .*

God's marvelous works also include His blessings to men in Job 35-37, the purpose of which is stated by Elihu's final words: *"Therefore, men revere Him, for does He not have regard for all the wise in heart?"*, 37:24.

Epilogue

God blessed Job "so that the friends would realize that Job stands in a favorable relationship to himself and that what Job has said about himself is true

¹⁶ Habel, 499.

¹⁷ William F. Albright & David N. Freedman, gen. eds., *The Anchor Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1965), vol. 15, *Job: Introduction, Translation, And Notes*, by Marvin H. Pope, 283-284. (Pope translates the אֵת לְאֶרְצוֹ *im-ʿe'arso* as *favor or grace* due to contextual. Habel, due to thematic parallelism and emphatic אֵת *-im* particle usage in Job, sees no necessity to emend the text, therefore uses the reading: *"even His own earth."* (Habel, 500-501, 497).

(42:7-8)."¹⁸ The design of Job's doubled restoration in 42:10 was to symbolize "Yahweh's full acceptance of Job."¹⁹

¹⁸ Mitchell, p.145.

¹⁹ Hartley, 540.

CHAPTER 3

JOB'S THEOLOGY OF BLESSING: A PARADIGMATIC SHIFT

The Chinese word for *crisis* 危机, pronounced "wei-ji", is constructed of two words. The first character 危 means *danger*. The second, 机, means *opportunity*. Job found himself in a crisis, a situation in which the danger of the patriarch "cursing God and then dying" (as his wife encouraged and the satan heartlessly wagered) was insidiously real. But this was not the reason God had brought His servant Job into these unenviable circumstances. God saw the potential of proving the metal of His follower and the value of bringing Job through a situation that would sharpen and clarify his relationship with Him, using as the point of contestation Job's own theology of blessing.

The *sitz-im-leben* or "historical milieu" of Job's struggle focused on an Israelite theological dilemma: The ancient Israelites knew God as the Almighty whose name was synonymous with justice, therefore lack of blessing/misfortune, appeared to establish only one conclusion: "Every person's suffering is indicative of the measure of his guilt in the eyes of God." ¹ Actual experience however tossed such people on the horns of a dilemma, as in the case of the patriarch Job. God for such people became an enigma rather than the loving One Who

¹ CSSB, 731.

was their ever ready source of comfort. This *zeits-gheist* or “spirit of the times” of retribution theology, as presented by the three friends, acts as the foil from which Job slowly but surely through God’s use of successive tools extricates himself.

Most significantly Job’s conflict was a spiritual struggle between God and Job’s own conceptualization of God, the struggle between the True God and the “god” that Job had created after his own image, and God’s causing Himself to be discovered by the patriarch as the God of grace.

We will now examine the the journey of Job’s paradigm shift.

God’s Man Of Faith

Job, according to the witness of God’s Word in the prologue, was the epitome of the pious man “*blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil,*” 1:1. He functioned as intercessor and priest , 1:5. God Himself twice recognized Job’s righteousness before the angels, 1:8; 2:3. Even in Job’s incredibly severe initial testing, he maintained a resilient faith in God, 1:20-22. The second, even more excruciating, trial also elicited a faith response, though perhaps showing signs of deterioration; and yet, “*In all this, Job did not sin in what he said,*” 2:10.

Job does indeed use a curse, but his date of birth rather than God is the recipient, 3:1-11. Though Job scolds His Maker for supposed injustice, Job in all of his recorded words only speaks of his desire face to face to take legal action in opposition to God. Job cried out for an audience with God: 9:1-35; 13:3; 13:20-27. Job unreservedly hoped in God and His vindication, 13:15-16:

*Though He slay me, yet will I hope in Him;
I will surely defend my ways to His face.
Indeed, this will turn out for my deliverance,
for no godless man would dare come before Him!*

His reactions indicate an integral relationship with God, constantly referring his situation back to Him. Even the man enduring hardship is one “whom God has hedged in,” 3:20 (a statement demonstrative of the chaotic reversal Job was trying to sort out: this phrase had been used of God’s protective blessing, 1:10). Job recognized all the tribulation in his life as ultimately under God’s control: 6:4; 7:11-21; 17:6; 18:21; 19:5-13. Even Job’s creation of an unreal “phantom” God, who callously brings about calamities, demonstrates Job’s deliberations were immersed in thought with the One who was the center of his life: 12:13-25; 14:18-20; 16:9.

Job held a deep respect for God. Job knew God as the One Who lovingly created him, 10:8-12. He charged the friends with presumptuously arguing “for “ God against himself, a matter of great consequence, 13:7-11. This saint recognized God’s greatness in His power, Job 26.

Indicative of the pre-turmoil and continuing faith relationship Job enjoyed with God, this tested saint constantly and naturally drifted in and out of prayer conversation with God: 7:7-8; 10:1-22; 14:2-6; 16:7-8; 17:3-4; 21:4. His life was characterized by prayer, 12:4.

Job’s highest value was fellowship with the living God. He feared most the intrusion of sin and the resultant alienation from His Creator and Preserver, and so regularly sent and had his children purified, giving sacrifices for their

possible sins. Job thought, *"Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts,"* 1:5. Based on Job's then current paradigm, his loss of blessing seemed to indicate the far more cataclysmic spiritual loss of alienation from God: *"What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to me,"* 3:25. Even in distress Job flew to God alone for benefit and help.²

Job's Growing Awareness Of Inconsistencies In His Theological Framework

Job began making a shift in his paradigm with the complaining recognition that the wicked receive of God's good gifts, 12:6. Job even calls all creation to witness to this, 12:7-12. The wicked's blessings are manifold, 21:7-15.

Job's counselors have elaborated on the fate of the wicked (see 8:11-19; 15:20-35; 18:5-21; ch.20), but Job insists that experience shows just the reverse of what his friends have said. The wicked, who want to know nothing of God's ways and who even consider prayer a useless exercise (vv.14-15), flourish in all they do. Far from dying prematurely, as Zophar assumed concerning them (see 20:11), they live long and increase in power (v.7). Bildad's claim that the wicked have no offspring or descendants (see 18:19) Job flatly denies (vv.8.11).³

Job recognizes that the condition of blessing for the wicked is unstable, 21:16: *"But their prosperity is not in their own hands, so I stand aloof from the counsel of the wicked."* He questions God's failure to take action against them, 21:17-21. Job challenges his friends to a reality check, because contrary to their theology, sometimes it is the good in God's sight that have heartache and the evil

² Theodore G. Tappert, ed. and trans., The Book Of Concord: The Confessions Of The Evangelical Lutheran Church (Philiadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 368.28.

³ CSSB, 755.

that receive actual and apparent blessings, 21:22-26, 29-33.

Job's lack of blessing is due to testing, not to lack of righteousness, 23:8,10-12.

In 23:8,10: Job is frustrated over his apparent inability to have an audience with God, who knows that he is a upright man, Job is here answering Eliphaz's admonition beginning in 22:21: "Submit to God...and prosperity will come." Job replies that this is what he has always done (vv. 11-12), He treasures God's words more than his daily bread. He admits that God is testing him - not to purge away his sinful dross, but to show that Job is pure gold (see Ps. 119:11,101, 168; 1 Pe 1:7).⁴

In Job 24 God's silence in the face of wickedness and the cry of the oppressed/needly disproves the hard and fast theology of retribution espoused by the three friends, 24:1-12. The wicked trample justice and the oppressed, 24:13-17. Yet the enemies of God's people will meet their end, 24:18-21. Job then makes a statement of faith showing God's helping Job, slowly but surely, to hone down to perfection his theology of blessing. The summary in vv. 22-25 is the answer to Job 24:1. The patriarch says that God will indeed judge the wicked, but such working out of the divine theology of blessing/cursing finds its causation in God's timetable alone: Though they appear to receive blessings at this time, God will bless His people with justice, but this will be in His time and with His manner:

*But God drags away the mighty by his power;
though they become established, they have no assurance of life.
He may let them rest in a feeling of security,
but his eyes are on their ways.
For a little while they are exalted, and then they are gone;*

⁴ CSSB, p.758.

*they are brought low and gathered up like all others;
they are cut off like heads of grain.
"If this is not so, who can prove me false
and reduce my words to nothing?"*

In Job's interlude (28:1-28) Job states God's wisdom alone is the answer to why the good suffer and the wicked prosper. Though this mystery remains to be solved, God's will for people is that they should yet fear Himself and shun evil, regardless of circumstances: "*And He said to man, 'The fear of the Lord--that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding.'*"28:28. Let God handle His part, we should simply continue to be faithful.

In Job's monologue of Job 29-31 he expresses his former blessed state, preeminent being sweet fellowship with God. The blessings, for Job, were a confirmation of that ongoing relationship; but now that these were gone, though nonessential, their absence seemed to indicate something far worse was amiss. He yearned for God's past presence in His life, 29:1-6, "*when God's intimate friendship blessed my house,*" 29:4. In 29:7-25 Job's blessing reversal is cited. This theme continues in 30:1-31, where He significantly points to God and not another as the ultimate orchestrator: "*God has unstrung my bow and afflicted me,*" 30:11(cf. 30:18-23). He call to God to reestablish communication: "*I cry out to You, O God, but You do not answer; I stand up, but You merely look at me,*" 30:20. Job, citing his original but now shattered theological position and the obvious inconsistency that developed, states in 30:25-26:

*Have I not wept for those in trouble?
Has not my soul grieved for the poor?
Yet when I hoped for good, evil came;*

when I looked for light, then came darkness.

Job 31:1-40 is Job's climatic finale, again relating his entire experience back to God, seeking to make sense out of a very difficult situation. Job acknowledges God's vindication against evil doers, 31:2-3; asks if God has not seen his blamelessness, 31:4; and then goes through a catalogue of possible sins, for which Job calls down curses on himself if committed, 31:5-34, 38-40. Repeatedly he states that out of reverence for God he would never do these things, 31:13-14, 23, 28. Paramount, as always, is Job's desire to have audience with God, 31:35-37.

Job's second monologue, 40:3-5, is his response to God's Theophany,

where God had just shown Job His almightiness as a means to help Job's perspective: the God Whose loving almightiness brought the world into existence, whose knowledge transcends that of all people, is the God who watches over Job and all others. In the face of seemingly contradictory information His own do not have to threat that He has left His throne, lost tract of us, or that the forces of Yahweh and evil are equally powerful. All things are under control, He knows exactly what He wants to do and has the power greater than the universe to bring it to completion according to His design. He has given all the blessings of creation, and it is they that point to His greatest blessing to us: Himself.

Job's is a statement lasting a mere three verses, Job 40:3-5, but is indicative of a mighty shift through which Job's paradigm had just come:

*Then Job answered the LORD:
 "I am unworthy-
 -how can I reply to you?
 I put my hand over my mouth.
 I spoke once, but I have no answer--
 twice, but I will say no more."*

In Job's third monologue he again submits to God, 42:1-6, recognizing God's almightiness in purpose, 42:2; his own limitations of understanding, 42:3; and having had listened to God speak His theology. The result was a paradigm shift and a closer walk: *"My ears had heard of You but now my eyes have seen You,"* 42:5; and repentance: *"Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes,"* 42:6.

Conclusion

In conclusion it is important to make several observations. From the prologue to the epilogue Job's deep relationship with God is evidenced by means of his constant references to God. Job continually intertwined God's name into his arguments, giving indication of the significant place God had in Job's priorities, even in the heat of spiritual battle. Though not having perfect blessing theology, he knew the solution had to come from God.

Second, God used a succession of tools to help him develop accurate blessing theology: the pre-turmoil blessings, the withdrawal of those blessings, the three friends, Elihu, and His own theophany. Each helped to bring Job slowly closer to Himself and to a proper understanding of blessing.

Third, as seen above, Job's faith would sometimes readdress the same

problem in his blessing theology. This is understandable for growth in God's grace is not always on an upward inclining linear plane, saints often readdress the same battle.

Fourth, God brought Job to a place where He alone was the answer to Job's questions of blessing theology. He not only is the origin and orchestrator of all blessing, He Himself *is* our blessing. The followers of Yahweh may or may not have the manifestations of blessing; they might not even have the answer to the question: "Why?"; but they have Him, they know Him, they are intimately known by Him, and that is enough.

CHAPTER 4

THE THEOLOGY OF BLESSING AS PROCLAIMED THROUGH JOB

All Good Gifts Are From God

Throughout Job there is no other source of blessing. James 1:17 confirms this fact: *“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.”* When the one pronouncing the blessing is a person the blessing is understood as a request for the Lord Himself to bless. In order for any blessing to take effect the one pronouncing must stand in a faith relationship with YHWH and the situation in which the blessing is pronounced must likewise be subject to the will of God. The blessing is never something that takes a life of its own in contradistinction to being something that God continually and intimately is involved with.

Blessings Are Good And Are Part Of The Life Of The Child Of God

God provides blessings as an expression of His love toward us.¹ At issue in a theology of blessing is not whether it is right or wrong, but perspective. Even the friends' speeches contain...

...many accents which the Bible or “special revelation” affirms elsewhere in more specifically theological dimension.

Hence it is important to stress the the friends can virtually never be

¹ Luther directs us to ask God for His blessing: Tappert, 353.9.

faulted for what they say *per se*. In fact, the book no doubt wishes to reaffirm the truth of what they say - as far as it goes...They are ultimately faulted because unmindful of what the reader knows on the basis of the prologue they have virtually made God a prisoner of His own "law," have transmuted orthodoxy into orthodoxism, and forgotten that the ultimate verdict between man and God is a relational one, finally transcending laws and codes altogether.²

The blessings found in Job are those which God does indeed give, though exceptions do exist; i.e. Zophar's guarantee of a life "brighter than noonday", 11:13.

The Theology Of Blessing Is Relational

Blessing, by nature, is intimately connected to Yahweh. Rather than being an end in itself, God's foremost purpose of blessing is the bringing of people into relationship with Himself, the highest of Scriptural blessings³, and the strengthening of people in the same. God used the presence, absence, and even an incorrect theology of blessing to bring Job closer to Himself. The concept of blessing being mechanically achieved by the mere implementation of certain procedures apart from relationship with Yahweh is non-existent.⁴

The Substance Versus The Attribute

The temptation of the satan to Job was to equate the reality of God's

² Horace D. Hummel, The Word Becoming Flesh: An Introduction To The Origin, Purpose, And Meaning Of The Old Testament (St. Louis:Concordia Publishing House, 1979), 475.

³ Hartley, 388.

⁴ Salvation is *the* blessing of Christ: Tappert, 107.3.

presence and love for Job with only one of the relational attributes: blessing, the non-essential outward manifestation/confirmation of a living relationship with God and His resultant favor. The temptation was to lock Job's focus on something secondary rather than the Substance Himself, disrupting Job's faith relationship with God through idolatry: seeking the gift instead of the Giver, focusing on a creation instead of the Creator.

Satan used this focus on circumstances to deceive Eve, Genesis 3:5; and the Hebrews: "*The LORD hates us; so he brought us out of Egypt to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us,*" Deuteronomy 1:27. The *opinion legislopinion of the law*, of why we experience "lack" of God's blessing and even suffer what might appear to be a curse, comes from our old Adam. The temptation is to attribute to God unsavory motives in the light of present circumstances, causing secondary manifestations to distort and finally obliterate from view the primary, YHWH Himself. God enabled Job to overcome this obstacle by focusing Job's attention on Himself, the Substance.⁵

Theocentrism Versus Anthropocentrism

Mankind's movement from anthropocentrism to Theocentrism is God's goal of all history, and the process through which God was individually taking Job. When blessings have an inappropriate focus, people in effect make themselves the center of existence rather than Yahweh. The result, as in Job's

⁵ To achieve this goal God sometimes causes rewards to not be given immediately to the people, so that "they learn not to trust in their own righteousness, but to seek the will of God rather than the rewards": Tappert, 134:197-201, especially 198.

case, is turmoil. God brought Job to true wisdom (28:28), and blessings received their correct prioritization serving God's plan.⁶

The Basis Of Blessing Is Grace

Commenting on 42:12, Mitchell states that בָּרַךְ /*brk* *blessing* in Job and the Old Testament

is a rich theological word with the connotation of God's free grace and favor, given not by merit, but solely *propter Christum* [for the sake of Christ]. By using the same word [in the epilogue] as in the prologue, the full restoration of fellowship with God is stressed. In the OT *brk* is incarnational; God comes down to the level of His creatures and works in the physical realm. As with Jesus' healing miracles, the forgiveness of sins is accompanied by physical healing and restoration.^{7,8}

Do People Serve God For Blessing Or For Grace

The satan believed Job's faith was motivated by opportunism, the quest for temporal blessing based on one's own merit. Genuine blessing theology is different:

If, however, as Yahweh contends, the relationship is based on the Gospel of free grace, whereby God blesses man out of unconditional love *propter Christum* [for the sake of Christ], and man serves God freely in joyful gratitude for grace, then temporal suffering will not abrogate man's faith in God, but will instead serve to exercise and strengthen man in faith as he trusts in an eschatological restoration by God, in accordance with the theology of the cross - even as Christ rose

⁶ Luther tells us to seek first God's kingdom, and He will provide the necessary eternal and temporal blessings, Tappert, 428.58.

⁷ Christopher W. Mitchell, "Job 42 (Revised Edition), 1995", Concordia Seminary Job Class Handout, 3, Transcript in the hand of Charles A. Fox, Chino Hills, CA.

⁸ We receive Christ's blessings (salvation) through faith: Tappert, 114:49; cf. 139.228; 153.300; 162.361.

from the dead.⁹

The Causative Elements Of Blessing

When properly understood, i.e in the sphere of sanctification, there are causative reasons that form part of God's theology of blessing¹⁰; but the foundation is solely in God's grace and His discretion to fulfill. Thus we observe that God does reward sanctified behavior, repentance, sacrifices, submission to God, benevolent activity, innocence, prayer, etc.; but how and when He blesses is according to His love and wisdom. We also observe that He blesses out of total grace because no one's hands are truly clean; in fact God even blesses those who are "least worthy."

The Purpose Of Blessing

The purpose of blessing has but one ultimate goal: to act as a tool in the Father's hand to bring us into closer relationship with Himself, who not only *gives* blessing but *is* our supreme and most awesome blessing, from whom all other blessings receive their worth. His purposes include establishing hope, elimination of injustice, corrective intervention, encouragement to revere and follow God,

⁹ Mitchell, "Job 42", 4.

¹⁰ Though the righteousness of the law cannot merit Jesus' forgiveness, it is good and honored by God with material as well as spiritual blessings: Tappert, 110.22-24; cf. 133.193-194; 149.278; 161.354-355; 210.174; 383.134; 383.136; 385.148; 387.164-165. Tappert, 162.362-372 contains a lengthy article on works and faith as related to rewards from God; cf. 552.9. Of course the motivation is not to be the rewards (under the law) but from the fruit of the Spirit, which God gladly rewards; Tappert, 566.16-17.

demonstration of Divine favor¹¹ deliverance, and finally salvation.

The Nature Of The Blessings

God's blessings to us include spiritual (correction, deliverance, salvation, resurrection, etc.) as well as material (long life, prosperity, offspring, success, fertility, honor, etc.). Further examples of specific blessings are listed in chapter one of this paper.

Blessings From God Often Are Given Through Natural Means

Many blessings, such as those which Job received in Job 42:12, came through God's providing the necessary ingredients, not God creating something totally new. God blessed Job by using the natural means of rain, sunshine, and food that are necessary for the support of animal and plant life to accomplish the blessing, a method God uses most of the time in Scripture.¹²

The Interpretation Of The Lack Of Blessing May Differ From The Actual Cause

Mitchell makes this very succinct observation:

The interpretation might differ from the cause; the problem in the book of Job is that Job's suffering has a Gospel cause (Job is singled out for suffering because he is a righteous man without equal on earth, 1:8), but his suffering is given a Law interpretation by the friends and at times by Job.¹³

¹¹ Tappert, 289.7

¹² Mitchell, 346.

¹³ Christopher W. Mitchell, "Observations On The Theology Of Suffering, 1995", Concordia Seminary Job Class Handout, 1, Transcript in the hand of Charles A. Fox, Chino Hills, CA.

A Theology Of Blessing Requires Walking In The Light Of God's Revelation
Instead Of Walking In The Darkness Of Experience Based Judgments

Though experiences be difficult or even impossible to interpret, as they were for Job, we proceed solely on the basis of God's revelation. Even with Job's probable second millennium B.C. date, here as well as in most wisdom literature God's revelation is a presupposition.¹⁴ The theology of retribution was clear. Job and his three friends failed in addition to fully understand God's grace as portrayed in that revelation and God's character as revealed in natural revelation. Through God's Theophany they better comprehended what He had already revealed.¹⁵

Suffering When Sent From God Is Ultimately A Blessing

God through His allowing the satan to test Job proved that Job's service was based on relationship with YHWH for grace. When the absence of blessing caused an upheaval in his theological paradigm, God walked him through the *tentatio/test*, causing the patriarch to develop a more profound faith in Himself:

The faith we speak of has its existence in penitence. It ought to grow and become firmer amid good works as well as temptations and dangers, so that we become ever stronger in the conviction that God cares for us, forgives us for Christ's sake. No one learns this without many severe struggles...While we are receiving encouragement and comfort in the midst of our terrors, other spiritual impulses increase, such as knowledge and fear of God, love of God, and hope. We are renewed, as Paul says (Col.3:10; II Cor. 3:18), 'in the knowledge,' and 'beholding the glory of the Lord, we are changed into His likeness'; that

¹⁴ Hummel, 476.

¹⁵ Even the Confessions state how we ought to depend on Scripture in the light of any apparent contradictions: Tappert, 370.39-46.

is, we acquire the true knowledge of God, enabling us truly to fear Him and to trust that He cares for us and hears us.¹⁶

Yahweh used bane to provide final benefit, a theme of Eliphaz, 5:17-18. God's concern is not so much with the presence or absence of blessing, but with His love motivated activity that continually seeks to bring all of mankind into relationship with Himself, using whatever means He deems most beneficial for this highest of blessings.

Blessing And Its Relation To The *Missio Dei*/The Mission Of God

The ultimate purpose of blessing is missionary in nature: to bring all nations into vital relationship with God. He desires to heal the nations from the curse of the Fall, the destruction of perfect communion with Himself, to the joy of His presence. In Emmanuel He restored His presence, and we have been blessed with every blessing in the heavenly places, Ephesians 1:3. This blessing of His presence will be actualized in totality in heaven.

Beyond the references to mankind in general, *the nations* specifically are mentioned in 36:31, where they are blessed by Yahweh's governance and provision.

The Wicked Receive God's Blessing

Job clearly states that God blesses the wicked. Jesus Himself said this in Matthew 5:45 for He is the God of $\alpha\gamma\alpha\pi\eta$ /agape or *love*, and has His own purposes in mind. He desires that these people be given opportunity to come to

¹⁶ Tappert, 160.350-351.

faith in Himself, 2 Peter 3:9.

God Is The One In Control

Job found out directly from God what James wrote much later in James 1:17: God is a God “who does not change like shifting shadows.” The conclusion of Job, just as the conclusion of the Lord’s prayer, focuses our faith in the reality of God’s Almightyness: He will continue to fulfill His plan for us and the blessings to be given with exhaustive completeness and perfect timing. Though the ways of God working out His theology of blessing in the life of the believer are sometimes an enigma, in faith the believer holds onto revealed knowledge of the power, wisdom, and love of the Almighty God, and this is sufficient to calm the troubled breast. “Though I might not understand His hand”, one saint has said, “I know His heart.” We then can rest though the battle continues, because we know the God Who controls all of history...and Who loves me, having proved it for eternity by the cross. He is the same One Who upholds and directs my life, though I might not cognitively understand His overarching plan. “Just trust Me,” He tells us, and when we do He receives the glory due His name.

ILLUSTRATIONS



THE CHINESE CHARACTER FU/BLESSING



BIBLICAL USAGE OF

בָּרוּךְ/baruk AND אֲשֵׁרִי/asre

(Diagram based on Mitchell, 353-356.)

A Positional Illustration Of The Blessing Continuum

God

“Young” Job

“Mature” Job

**Job During
His Weak
Moments
Of Trial.** 51

Job’s 3 Friends

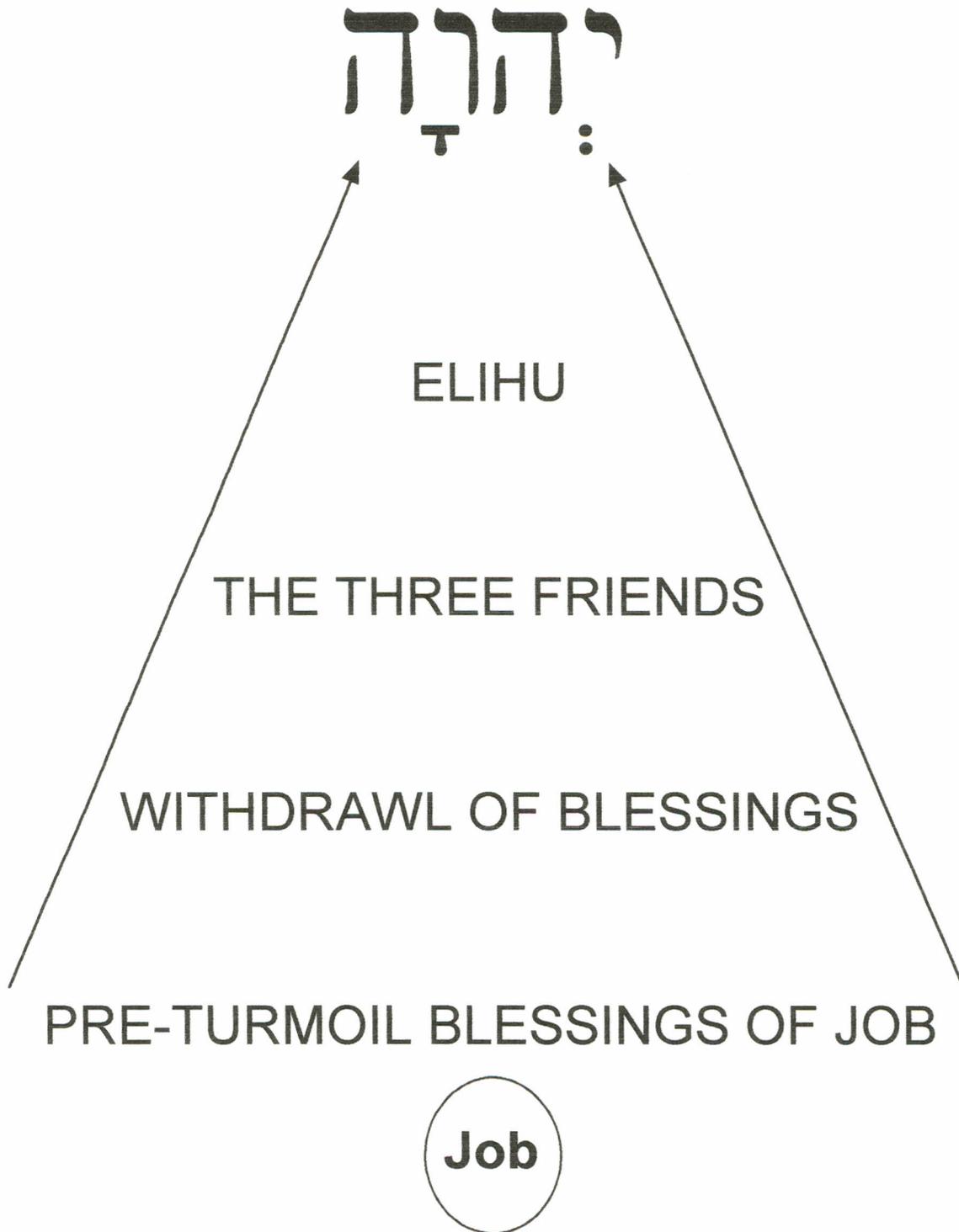
Elihu



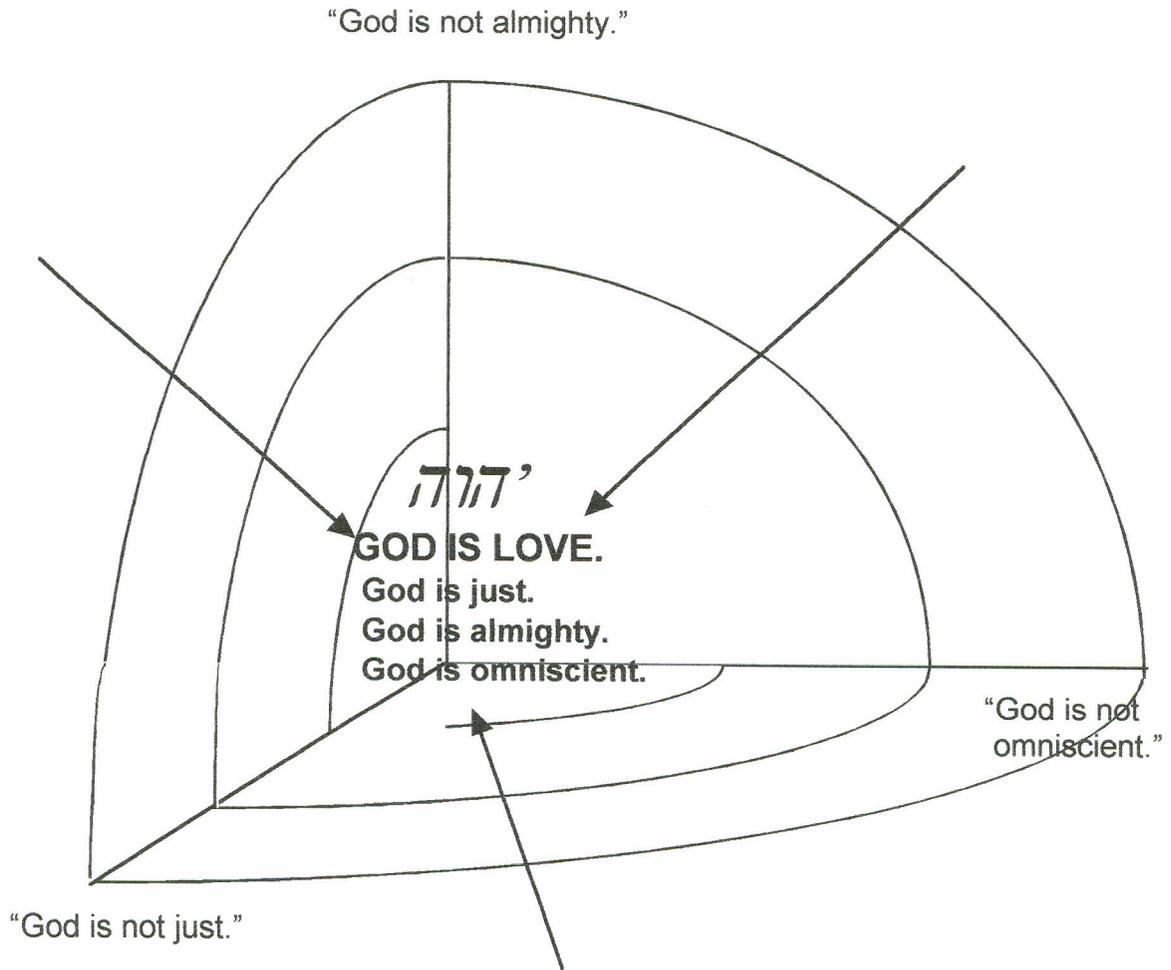
Good People Receive Blessing
Wicked People Receive Curse.
Good People Also Receive “Bad”, But Totally Within God’s Limitations
Wicked People Also Receive God’s Blessing.

In The End God Will Settle All Matters.

An Illustration Of The Tools God Used To Bring Job To An Accurate Theology Of Blessing



An Illustration Using The XYZ Axis: The Theology Of Blessing Continuum



*"But grow in the grace and knowledge
of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."
2 Peter 3:18*

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