

CONCERNING PATHOGENS—ORIGIN and SOLUTION

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The Origin of Pathogens¹

- 1) We have no record of diseases before the Flood. As a consequence of the Fall, God cursed the soil, but nothing suggests the creation of bad bacteria. (Actually, it appears that all animals were herbivorous until after the Flood.)² Before the Flood the “firmament” filtered out the destructive rays from the sun. But that “firmament” was destroyed at the time of the Flood, so from then on the planet has received the negative effects of those rays. After the Flood there was a progressive reduction in longevity and size, of both living beings and plants. We understand that the planet is considerably less congenial to life (human, animal, plant) now than before. And the Flood was God’s devastating answer to a terrible attack by Satan against the “seed”.³
- 2) In Deuteronomy 7:15, as a consequence of keeping and obeying Jehovah’s commandments, statutes and judgments, God promises: “Jehovah will take away from you all sickness, and will afflict you with none of the terrible diseases of Egypt” On the other hand, if they do not obey, God promises exactly the opposite, Deuteronomy 28:59-60. Repeatedly the Bible affirms that God uses disease and calamity to punish those who disobey and do evil; He also uses Satan himself, fallen angels (demons), and evil men.⁴ He uses evil to punish evil, so it follows that He can use pathogens, even if they are made by Satan and not God.
- 3) With respect to Jehovah, Psalm 103:3 affirms: “who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases.” Neither activity is automatic, but the potential is there. Would He heal a disease that He Himself caused? “God is not the author of confusion” (1 Corinthians 14:33). Since He did not commit the iniquities that He forgives, it is presumably also true that He did not cause the diseases that He heals.
- 4) Consider the description that Jehovah gave of Himself to Moses on that rarest of occasions: “Jehovah, God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth; keeping mercy unto the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin; and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children’s children unto the third and the fourth generation” (Exodus 34:6-7). He keeps mercy to the 1000th generation, He punishes to the 4th; the proportion is 250:1. The chances that Goodness and Truth would cause pathogens are probably no better than one in 250, if that.

¹ Pathogens are organisms that produce pathology or disease.

² When placed in a hyperbaric chamber simulating pre-flood atmospheric conditions, snake venom is neutralized.

³ The phrase ‘sons of God’ in Genesis 6:2,4 translates the Hebrew, *bene-haelohim*. In the other places where this phrase occurs, Job 1:6, 2:1, 38:7, it refers to angelic beings. Jude makes clear that Genesis 6:2 is no exception. “And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own habitation, He has secured in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day. Just as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them, in the same way as these [angels], having fornicated and gone after a different kind [ετερος] of flesh, are exhibited as an example, undergoing a punishment of eternal fire” (Jude 6-7). The author, under inspiration of God, affirms that the people of Sodom did what certain angelic beings did; they wanted sex with a different kind of flesh. Recall that the men of Sodom, old and young, from every quarter, wanted to rape the angels that were visiting Lot (Genesis 19:4-5). Whatever kind of flesh an angel has (when he materializes), it is not human flesh; it is precisely “a different kind [ετερος] of flesh”. The parallel passage in 2 Peter 2:4-6 links the crime of those angels to the Flood. (In Matthew 22:30 [Mark 12:25, Luke 20:35-36] the Lord does not say that angels do not have sex/gender. Evidently no baby angels [good or fallen] are born, but if angels are of only one gender they cannot reproduce in kind. Whenever an angel takes on human form in the Bible it is always the form of a man.) [And do not forget 1 Corinthians 11:10.]

So what? We know from modern medicine that every human being carries the father’s blood, not the mother’s, so the mixed race mentioned in Genesis 6:4 carried demon blood in their veins, not human; and we know from the Sacred Text that the human spirit is transmitted by the male sperm, so that mixed race had lost the human spirit and presumably the “image of God”. If Satan had succeeded in corrupting everybody, it would have been impossible for the Messiah, the second Adam, to be born, and Genesis 3:15 could not have been fulfilled. Satan’s challenge to God’s plan was so incredible, and came so close to succeeding, that God’s response was to destroy everything and start over, using eight humans that had not yet been contaminated.

I offer the above as a possible historical background. If Satan got the clue that he was not going to be able to frustrate the plan of redemption, then all that was left to him was spite—do as much damage to “the image of God” as he could (his only way of ‘getting back’ at the Creator, besides taking as many with him to the Lake as possible). Having said all that, however, please note that if pathogens existed before the Flood, it makes no practical difference to the subject in hand: the origin of pathogens and the solution to them.

⁴ Obviously evil men play right into Satan’s hand. The greed that leads men to put hormones in meat, make and sell ‘medicines’ that are damaging, put aspartame in drink, etc. etc., plus certain life styles and eating habits, all contribute to set us up, to make us more susceptible to pathogens.

- 5) With reference to the Messiah, Isaiah 53:4 says: “Surely He bore our diseases and carried our pains.” Both of the Hebrew terms here have to do with physical sickness, not merely emotional ‘griefs’ or ‘sorrows’. The inspired commentary in Matthew 8:17 makes this clear: “He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses.” If He has already taken them, would He turn around and put them back on us?
- 6) We understand that Jehovah the Son took on human flesh in order to destroy Satan (Hebrews 2:14) and to undo his works (1 John 3:8); in other words, to recover what the first Adam lost. “As all in Adam die, even so all in Christ shall be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22). “The last Adam became a life-giving spirit” (1 Corinthians 15:45). In John 10:10 the Lord Jesus contrasts Himself with Satan: “**The** thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” In John 8:44 the Lord Jesus said that Satan “was a murderer from the beginning”. Well now, does ‘more abundant’ life include pathogens? Do pathogens produce life or death? If death, then they must be of Satan—murderer, thief, destroyer, father of lies—and not of the Author of life (Acts 3:15). “Every good giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the lights” (James 1:17). So where do bad givings and nasty ‘gifts’ come from?
- 7) There are those who doubt the possibility that Satan could create pathogens, but it is not a question of ‘creating’ from nothing, but of deforming. The Creator made good bacteria (billions of them, invisible but necessary to our physical existence) and Satan deforms/degrades them, altering the DNA. Surely, if people are now cloning, playing with genetic engineering, messing with DNA, why not Satan? Is he less intelligent than we are? Does he have less power than we? Actually, 2 Peter 2:11 says that angels “are greater in power and might” than unjust human beings; and Satan was created as the number one angelic being (Ezekiel 28:12-16, Jude 9). If unregenerate people can do it, then Satan and his angels can too.
- 8) Repeatedly the Lord Jesus expelled a demon of blindness, deafness or paralysis and thereupon the person was healed. So the problem was caused by a demon, which means that the demon had altered the molecular structure of the victim. In Luke 13:10-17 the Lord heals a woman who had been “bound by Satan” for eighteen years; the Lord cites Satan by name, but verse 11 speaks of “a spirit of infirmity”. Severely demonized people are visibly altered and degraded. If Satan can degrade a human being, infinitely more complex than a microbe, to alter a mere bacterium would be the essence of simplicity.
- 9) On more than one occasion the Lord said that if we ask anything “in His name” He, or the Father, will do it. To ask “in His name” is to ask something He is asking, or would ask. If Jesus would do it, then it is in His name, or in His will. We have repeated statements that He healed everyone who came to Him, and of every kind of malady, including congenital defects.¹ Perhaps He healed everybody because, whatever their problem, Satan was involved somewhere. In Acts 10:38 Peter says that Jesus “went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil.” The devil is Satan. Did Peter mean that every time Jesus saw an oppressed person He healed them, or did he mean that everyone whom Jesus healed was oppressed, or both? The episode at the pool of Bethesda (John 5:2-13)² would appear to eliminate the first option, that every time He saw an oppressed person He healed them, because there was a “great multitude” of oppressed people there, and Jesus obviously saw them, but He did nothing to help them.³ This leaves us with the clear conclusion that it is the second meaning that is correct, everyone whom Jesus healed was oppressed, which means that Satan is involved in all maladies.

¹ Congenital defects are presumably the result of the effects of sin upon the gene pool down through the years and succession of generations; this would include allergic weakness and immune deficiency. Aside from his role in the Fall, Satan has a direct participation in much of the sin in the world.

² Less than 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit the last clause of verse 3 and all of verse 4 (as in NIV, NASB, LB, [TEV], etc.). But obviously all those people would not stay there (in discomfort) day in and day out, year in and year out, if nothing was happening. Obviously people got healed, and verse 7 makes clear that it had to do with the stirring of the water—so why did those manuscripts not omit verse 7 as well? The UBS editions do us a considerable disservice by following a very small minority of manuscripts and making the angel “of the Lord”. Since angels can be good or fallen, it seems most likely to me that the angel involved was fallen. A capricious, occasional healing condemned all those people to added suffering (being at the pool instead of the comfort of home), including the frustration and despair of those who never made it (like the man Jesus healed). A sadistic procedure is just like Satan.

³ Why did not Jesus heal everybody? I do not know, I was not there. From the Record it appears that the Plan involved His healing only those who came to Him, in person or by proxy, except for an occasional strategic healing that was unsolicited. The Father is seeking those who will worship Him in spirit and truth—you have to want Him, you have to come.

We conclude that pathogens are a work of Satan.¹

The Solution for Pathogens

- 1) The Son of God was manifested for the purpose of “undoing the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8), and it is incumbent upon us to continue His work here in this world (John 20:21). How can you undo a work without undoing its consequences as well? The Father sent the Son to undo Satan’s works, and the Lord Jesus Christ is sending us to undo Satan’s works.
- 2) Indirectly, if not directly, Adam’s Fall was a work of Satan, and it follows that the consequences of that fall are consequences of that work. This includes the sin nature in man and Satan’s control of the ‘world’; it includes sin, sickness and disease.
- 3) In Luke 10:19 the Lord Jesus said: “Behold, I give [so 98% of the Greek manuscripts] you the authority . . . over all the power of the enemy.”² The phrase, ‘all the power’ presumably includes his works, and therefore their consequences. Someone with authority can forbid action, so we can prevent Satan from doing things. Verse 19 goes on to say, “and nothing shall by any means hurt you”, so it may be that the primary focus here is upon defense—defending ourselves, and others, against Satan’s attacks.³ So, are we going to use our authority, or not?
- 4) After His resurrection, with the victory won, the Lord Jesus said: “These signs will follow those who believe, in my name . . . they will lay hands on the sick and they will recover” (Mark 16:17-18). The term “sick” translates the Greek, *αρρωστος*, which covers a fairly wide area of meaning—it includes a variety of maladies, even death dealing epidemics (so it includes pathogens).⁴
- 5) In John 14:12 the Lord Jesus said: “Most assuredly I say to you, the one believing into me, he too will do the works that I do; in fact he will do greater works than these, because I am going to my Father.” “Most assuredly” is actually “amen, amen”—rendered “verily, verily” in the AV. Only John registers the word as repeated, in the other Gospels it is just “amen”. In the contemporary literature we have no example of anyone else using the word in this way. It seems that Jesus coined His own use, and the point seems to be to call attention to an important pronouncement: “Stop and listen!” Often it precedes a formal statement of doctrine or policy, as here.

“The one believing into me, he too will do the works that I do.” This is a tremendous statement, and not a little disconcerting. Notice that the Lord said, “will do”; not ‘maybe’, ‘perhaps’, ‘if you feel like it’; and certainly not ‘if the doctrine of your church permits it’! If you believe you **will do!** The verb ‘believe’ is in the present tense; if you are believing you will do; it follows that if you are not doing it is because you are not believing. $2 + 2 = 4$. Doing what? “The works that I do.” Well, Jesus preached the Gospel, He taught, He cast out demons, He healed all sorts and sizes of sickness and disease, He raised an occasional dead person, and He performed a variety of miracles (water to wine, walk on water, stop a storm instantaneously, transport a boat several miles instantaneously, multiply food, shrivel a tree—and He implied that the disciples should have stopped the storm and multiplied the food, and He stated that they could shrivel a tree [Peter actually took a few steps on water]). So how about us? The preaching and teaching we can handle, but what about the rest? I once heard the president of a certain Christian college affirm that this verse obviously could not mean what it says

¹ I owe the idea that pathogens could be Satan’s work to Dr. Ralph Winter, founder of the US Center for World Mission.

² The Lord is addressing the Seventy, not the Twelve, and there were doubtless others around; also, this was spoken perhaps four months before His death and resurrection. It follows that this authority is not only for apostles, and there is no indication of a time limit.

³ The Text must mean at least that, but can we also command Satan to undo what he (or his servants) has done? I know a pastor in Brazil whose car was stolen; he commanded Satan (he addressed him directly, by name) to return the car within 24 hours, and before the time was up the car was parked in front of the pastor’s house [he told me this as an example of how to spoil Satan’s goods]. But what about sickness, would it not be better to use God’s power (Ephesians 3:20)? I understand that the Lord Jesus always used God’s power, so we had better follow His example. Since we have access to the limitless power of Christ, we do not need Satan’s power and should not give him the satisfaction of seeing us use it. (Considering how slippery he is, there is the distinct possibility that he would deceive us and get us to do things that we shouldn’t.)

(There are those who argue that Satan has been divested of all power, based on texts like Hebrews 2:14, Revelation 1:18, Colossians 2:15 and Matthew 28:18. The cruel facts of life that surround us and fill the world would appear to weigh inconveniently against that idea, but the Sacred Text itself disavows such a view—what Satan will do through the antichrist and the false prophet reflects considerable power. I understand the texts listed above to refer to Satan’s being divested of and deposed from his position as god/ruler of this world, along with all privileges and perquisites pertaining to that office. He is now obliged to function as a usurper, bluffing his ‘rights’.)

⁴ Only three Greek manuscripts, of objectively, demonstrably inferior quality, omit Mark 16:9-20, against 1,700 that have the passage; so it is certainly part of the inspired Text. Mark wrote 1:1-16:20. For an exhaustive treatment of this question please see Appendix E in my book, *The Identity of the New testament Text IV*.

because it is not happening! Well, in his own experience and in that of his associates I guess it isn't. But many people today cast out demons and heal, and I personally know someone who has raised a dead person. Miracles are also happening. So how about me? And you?

"In fact he will do greater works than these." Well now, if we cast out demons, heal and perform miracles, is that not enough? Jesus wants more, He wants "greater things" than those just mentioned [do not forget what He said in Matthew 7:22-23]. Notice again that He said "will do", not maybe, perhaps, or if your church permits. But what could be 'greater' than miracles? This cannot refer to modern technology because in that event such 'greater things' would not have been available to the believers during the first 1900 years. Note that the key is in the Lord's final statement (in verse 12), "because I am going to my Father". Only if He won could He return to the Father, so He is here declaring His victory before the fact. It is on the basis of that victory that the 'greater things' can be performed. Just what are those 'greater' things? For my answer, see my outline(essay), "Biblical Spiritual Warfare".

In verse 12 the verb 'will do' is singular, both times, so it has to do with the individual. Observe that the Lord did **not** say, "you apostles", "only during the apostolic age", "only until the canon is complete", or whatever. He said, "the one believing", present tense, so this applies to any and all subsequent moments up to our time. To deny the truth contained in this verse is to make the Lord Jesus Christ out to be a liar. Somehow I do not think that is very smart.¹

- 6) Now consider 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24: "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it." Well, when we think of sanctification, the first thing that comes to mind is the spirit. But if we want to live a holy life, then the sanctification must include the soul as well; that much seems reasonable enough. But for the whole **body** to be sanctified, not to mention "completely" and "blamelessly", is a more difficult concept; how can it? However difficult the idea may seem to us, there is the Text, and it goes on to say that it is God who will do it. We know that the resurrection and glorification of our bodies are on the way; but if those bodies are to be sanctified here and now, and if pathogens are Satan's thing, then to free the bodies from those pathogens must be part of the process, and therefore must be within God's will.
- 7) In Luke 4:18-21 Jesus includes "to set at liberty those who are oppressed" (Isaiah 58:6) as one of the things He was sent to do. Turning to Isaiah 58:6 we find Jehovah stating what kind of 'fast' He would like to see: "To loose the fetters of wickedness [a], to undo the yoke-ropes [b]; to let oppressed ones go free [a], and that you (pl.) break every yoke [b]." As is typical of Hebrew grammar, the two halves are parallel. "To loose the fetters of wickedness" and "to let oppressed ones go free" are parallel. Who placed the "fetters" and who is doing the oppressing? Well, although people can certainly forge their own bonds through their own wicked life style, I take it that the point here is that wicked beings have placed the fetters on others. "To undo yoke-ropes" and "that ye break every yoke" go together. First we should untie the ropes that bind the yoke to the neck, then we should break the yokes themselves. I gain the clear impression that this text is talking about the activity of Satan's servants, men and angels. Using culture, world-view, legal devices, threats, blackmail, lies, deception and just plain demonizing and witchcraft, they bind individuals, families, ethnic groups, etc., with a variety of fetters and instruments of oppression.
- So what does this have to do with our subject? Well, fasting was an important/required component in their worship of God. So this kind of 'fasting' is something that Jehovah overtly wants to see; it is specifically His will. So when we see any work of Satan in someone's life, it is God's will that we undo it. If we know it is God's will, we can proceed with complete confidence. And it is part of our commission (John 20:21).
- 8) Notice also Psalms 149:5-9. "Let the saints exult in glory; let them sing for joy in their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand—to execute vengeance upon the nations and punishments upon the peoples; to bind their kings with chains and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the written judgment. This honor is for all His saints." Note that the saints are in their beds, so the activity described in the subsequent verses must take place in the spiritual realm. I assume that the 'kings' and 'nobles' include both men and fallen angels. The activity described is the prerogative of "all His saints"—if you are one of those saints, it is up to you.

¹ Also, to affirm that the miraculous gifts ceased when the last shovel of dirt fell on the Apostle John's grave is an historical falsehood. Christians who lived during the 2nd, 3rd and 4th centuries, whose writings have come down to us, affirm that the gifts were still in use in their day. No 20th or 21st century Christian, WHO WAS NOT THERE, is competent to contradict them.

We conclude that it is our responsibility to undo pathogens.¹

Faith = Basic Prerequisite

The theological training I myself received programmed me not to expect supernatural manifestations of power in and through my life and ministry. As a result, I personally am finding it to be difficult to exercise the kind of faith that the Lord Jesus demands. Consider:

- 1) In Matthew 8:5-13 the centurion understood about authority—he gave orders and they were obeyed, promptly and without question. But the Lord Jesus said he had unusually great faith—faith in what? Faith in the Lord’s spiritual authority; He could simply give an order and it would happen. Perhaps we should understand this sort of faith as an absolute confidence, without a taint of doubt or fear. In Matthew 21:21 the Lord said, “Assuredly . . . if you have faith and do not doubt” (see Mark 11:23, “does not doubt in his heart”) you can (actually “will”) shrivel a tree or send a mountain into the sea. See also Hebrews 10:22, “full assurance of faith”, 1 Timothy 2:8, “pray . . . without doubting”, James 1:6, “ask in faith with no doubting”. Mark 5:34 and Matthew 15:28 offer positive examples; while Peter blew it (Matthew 14:31, “why did you doubt?”).
- 2) If someone gives a commission, they will presumably back it up to the limit of their ability. Since Christ’s ability has no limit, His backing has no limit (on His end). In Matthew 28:18 He said, “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.” Then comes the commission: “As you go, make disciples . . . teaching them to obey all things that I have commanded you”—the pronoun refers back to the eleven apostles (verse 16). So what commands had Jesus given the Eleven? Among other things, “heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons” (in Matthew 10:8 perhaps 94% of the Greek manuscripts do not have “raise the dead”). The Eleven also heard John 20:21.² Knowing that we are being backed by the Sovereign of the universe, who has all authority and power, we can and should act with complete confidence.

But, Just How Should We Go About Doing It?

- 1) How did the Lord Jesus undo Satan’s works? He never touched a demonized person—just spoke to the demon. Others he healed by word or touch. When He turned water to wine or shriveled a tree He altered molecular structure. When He healed the demonically lame or blind He reversed the demonic alteration. All of this was done with God’s power.³ We ought to be able to follow His example.
- 2) The centurion did not say, “In the authority of Rome . . .”, he just said, “Do this; do that.” The Lord Jesus did not say, “In the authority of the Father . . .”, He just said, “Be clean! Go!” In Luke 10:19 He said, “I give you the authority over all the power of the enemy”—so we have the authority, so it is up to us to speak!! Just like Jesus did.
- 3) In Luke 17:6 we have a contrary to fact condition, which rendered literally would be: So the Lord said, “If you had faith [but you don’t] like a mustard seed *has*,⁴ you would say [but you aren’t] to this

¹ So how are people going to die, if we heal everything? How about dying in your sleep? Obviously everyone the Lord Jesus healed had to die; poor Lazarus had to die all over again! The wages of sin is death, physical and spiritual. The blood of God’s Lamb can save us from spiritual death, but not the physical. Also, if we heal someone today, that does not make them immune to future attacks. We have two Gospel accounts of Jesus healing Peter’s mother-in-law. Careful attention to the respective contexts convinces me that they were distinct occasions. If so, even if it is Jesus Himself who heals you, that does not mean that you will never get sick again.

Nothing in this study should be interpreted as a put-down of the people in the medical and scientific communities who are working to alleviate human suffering and even eradicate certain diseases. I would say they are trying to undo Satan’s works by natural means, which is fine; and they have had considerable success. I wish them well; more power to them. On one occasion Paul recommended a home remedy, and for Luke to be called a physician he must have practiced medicine.

² In recent years a spate of books has appeared on the subject of present day apostles and apostolic ministry. On the question of the ‘signs’ of an apostle, one sometimes encounters the assertion that certain things (like miracles) are exclusive to apostles. For starters, Stephen and Philip were deacons, not apostles. But John 14:12 makes clear that anyone believing into the Lord Jesus can and will do what He did; so dealing with pathogens will not be limited to ‘apostles’.

³ The point is, Jesus used God’s power to undo Satan’s works; He did not command Satan to undo his own works. However, Christ’s example comes from before the Victory, and Satan was working within his rights, so to speak. But now he has lost those rights, and works on the basis of bluff and usurpation. Just as we oblige a child to clean up a mess he made (hoping that it will teach him not to repeat), perhaps we should oblige Satan to clean up his mess, thereby forcing him to acknowledge his defeat. (Since he is very proud, that humiliation may encourage him to go somewhere else.)

⁴ I very much doubt that the Lord is talking about the size of their faith; rather He is talking about a quality of faith. What kind of ‘faith’ might a mustard seed have? Albeit so small, it reacts without question to the climactic circumstances, and grows to remarkable proportions. If we reacted similarly, without question, to the Holy Spirit’s promptings, our spiritual ‘climactic

mulberry tree, 'Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,' and it would have obeyed you." The second apodosis is placed in the past, whereas the protasis and first apodosis are in the present. It is a curious grammatical construction, but I imagine that the Lord is emphasizing the certainty of the response—if only they would speak!!

- 4) There are those who teach that we should not address Satan directly, but in Christ we are above Satan (Ephesians 1:20-21, 2:6). Further, James 4:7 gives a command, "Resist the devil . . .". It is not an optional point, we must resist him (there are many devils, but the devil is Satan). Surely one of the principal ways to resist someone is with words.¹ And we have the Lord's example; on at least two occasions He rebuked Satan directly, by name (Matthew 4:10, 16:23).
- 5) But what if God is punishing someone for their sin? In James 5:14-15 the prayer for the sick is followed by healing and "if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven". In the context this forgiveness of sin presumably has to do with the immediate punishment that is being dealt with, not eternal destiny. I submit for consideration the possibility that when we are prepared to undo Satan's work, wherever we may find it, God is prepared to suspend whatever use He may be making of that work.² Or what does Matthew 18:18 mean? "Assuredly I say to you, whatever (pl.) you (pl.) may bind on earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you may loose on earth will have been loosed in heaven."³ So how do we bind or loose if not by our word?
- 6) But what if God is perfecting one of His servants, like He did with Job?⁴ I believe Paul Billheimer (*Don't Waste Your Sorrows*) has given us a handle on a basic truth—the only way a human being can learn *αγαπη* love is through suffering. And the mainspring of God's Kingdom is *αγαπη* love, and God wants to prepare His servants for their responsibilities in the next world. So the lessons God wants us to learn come wrapped in unpleasant circumstances; but if we refuse a given lesson our spiritual growth stops. Further, sooner or later that lesson will return, and will keep on returning until we learn, or die (which is why Billheimer says, "don't waste your sorrows", because if we do not learn the first time we will have wasted that suffering).
- So what? Well, if God is giving one of His servants a lesson, we should not interfere. So how do we know when a given situation is a lesson in progress, as opposed to a work of Satan? Ah, there is the rub. How do we know? Well, who knows for sure? God does, obviously. So we should ask Him. If the Holy Spirit says it is a lesson, we should encourage the person to learn the lesson and move up. If it is not a lesson, then we undo Satan's work.
- Hebrews 12:7-11 deals with this subject. God disciplines His sons so that they may be partakers of His holiness. Though it be unpleasant, even painful, if we are exercised by it, then we grow, then we move up. Like Job, we must interact with what is going on, not sit passively and say, "God is doing His thing and I just have to grin and bear it". So if we see a servant of God just passively enduring a situation, we need to urge them to learn the lesson and grow.

circumstances', we should indeed uproot trees, literally. In Matthew 17:20 the Lord said, "If you have faith like a mustard seed *has*, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you." That is what He said, but we just do not believe it.

(But why did the Lord emphasize the size the mustard seed? No matter how small a seed is, it can germinate and produce. No matter how small a person may be [or seem to be] within the Kingdom of God, if they have the faith of a seed they will produce wonders.)

¹ However, I recognize that addressing Satan is not necessarily the only way of controlling his power (Luke 10:19). Presumably we can call on God to do it (but since He gave us the authority, He is likely to tell us it is up to us). But in either event we have to open our mouth and say something! We have to speak!!

But, since Satan is not omnipresent, how can we address him? Speaking in Jesus' name/authority, in obedience to His commission, it is in His interest to make sure our message is delivered, and obeyed. Since the good angels are here to serve us (Hebrews 1:14), that may be one of the things they do.

² This will not apply in rare (presumably) cases such as Paul's where, because of the tremendous revelations he had received, God used the "messenger" to keep Paul's head from swelling (2 Corinthians 12:7). This situation was sufficiently strange so that God explained to Paul the what and why.

³ I am aware that this verse is often understood as somehow having to do with discipline in the church, because of verses 15-17; but verse 18 begins with "Amen", which normally signals a new subject. There is a change of subject between 14 and 15, and I believe there is another between 17 and 18.

⁴ I was taught that Job was just a pawn in a contest between God and Satan, and in the end God said, "Look, I am bigger than you are and you are not competent to question me." So Job knuckled under and was blessed. I now understand that something very different was going on. If someone is the very best there is in a given field, they tend to stagnate—there is no one they can learn from; the others learn from them. God Himself declared that Job was His star pupil down here, he was the very best that there was. But Job had stagnated, and God knew that he had the potential to grow in his knowledge of Him, but for that to happen Job's theological package had to take a beating. The lesson was severe, but Job was exercised by it and learned, and moved up to a higher level of spiritual understanding. In his own words: "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You." Yes indeed, Job grew, Job moved up to a higher plane. And God's expectation was vindicated.

7) Related to item 6), but different, is “the fellowship of His sufferings” (Philippians 3:10). In Mark 15:30-31 we read: “Save yourself, and come down from the cross”; “He saved others, himself he cannot save”. The chief priests and scribes were mocking, but without knowing it they stated an important truth. If Jesus had come down from the cross He could not have saved us—to save us, He could not save Himself. I take this to be a principle that still operates; to save others we may have to accept suffering (it will likely come regardless of our attitude). Consider Paul: “I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the Church” (Colossians 1:24). “In my flesh” is presumably physical. In 2 Corinthians 1:5-7 “as you are partakers of the sufferings” makes clear that the principle passes on to succeeding generations. So also 1 Peter 4:12-13: “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings.” The “rejoice” bit I find to be difficult, but if suffering is the price we must pay to be used by God, and if we really desire to be so used, then maybe we will join Paul in his rejoicing.

8) I would translate Hebrews 11:1 like this: “Faith is a realization of things being hoped for, a declaration of things not being seen.” The concept of “hope” in the New Testament includes an ingredient of certainty (it is not mere wishful thinking). To declare as fact something we do not see is difficult for most of us, but I believe that is the point of the Text. True faith is able to declare the existence of something before seeing it. When the centurion gave an order, he was declaring what was going to happen, before the fact. He spoke and it happened. Of course the Lord Jesus did precisely the same, He spoke and it happened. I wonder if someday people will say about me, “Of course he did the same thing, he spoke and it happened.”

So, What Happens If We Don’t?

1) James 4:17—“Therefore, to the one knowing to do good and not doing it, to him it is sin.” So if I do not undo Satan’s works it goes on my record as sin, for which I must answer.

2) Ezekiel 22:30—“So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one. Therefore I have poured out my indignation on them.” The Text is clear: just one person could have made the difference, could have averted the destruction. So if I do not undo Satan’s works people continue to suffer, unnecessarily.

I am asking for help in prayer to elucidate this subject. If God shows you something, please pass it on.

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