

THE HUMBLE ALMIGHTY

Well, what other arguments was Lucifer presenting? Job's four friends came and they sat for seven days together in silence. They had had their listening training.

Eliphaz is the first to speak. His message comes from a very interesting place. "Now a word was secretly brought to me and my ear received a whisper of it. In disquieting thoughts in visions of the night when deep sleep falls on them fear came upon me and trembling which made all my bones shake." Job 4:12. Now you couldn't tell at first if that was a holy angel or a bad angel, because every time a holy angel shows up what do the people feel like? They are scared too.

"Can a mortal be more righteous than God? Can a man be more pure than his Maker?" God is demanding things of us that He Himself doesn't do? He is demanding that we become more righteous than He is.

God is demanding that we sacrifice ourselves for Him. We are to put all our interests and desires aside and just fulfill His desires. Fundamentally, God is being selfish. He is saying that we are supposed to be unselfish, but He has the ability to sit back and just have all of us run around and do His bidding.

"Satan had accused God of seeking merely the exaltation of Himself in requiring submission and obedience from His creatures and decreed that while the Creator exacted self-denial from all others He Himself practiced no self-denial and made no sacrifice." The Great Controversy, p. 502. "Can a mortal be more righteous than God?" Can an angel be more righteous than God? He is demanding things from us that He Himself doesn't do. We are supposed to love those who are opposed to us and look at what God does to those who oppose Him? He threatens us. We are supposed to be humble and submissive and friendly. And look at how He treats us. He threatens us if we don't fall into line there is this nebulous seeking to not existence sword of Damacles hanging over our heads.

Are we supposed to be more righteous than Him? He is demanding that we serve Him and respect Him; and yet, He doesn't respect our independence. If God tells you to go run an errand and you say, Well, I'd like to do this instead, what is He going to do?

These thoughts had not even entered the angel's minds before. Not doing what God had encouraged them to do had never popped into their mind. It wasn't considered.

And now Lucifer says, What if you did consider doing something that He didn't tell you to do? What would happen? Is that alright?

And Michael says, No, you should do what God says.

And Lucifer says, See, He is demanding that we submit.

"If He puts no trust in His servants, and if He charges His angels with error." Job 4:18. He doesn't trust us to make our own choices. He doesn't trust people down here. He didn't trust the angels back in the beginning. If He trusted us, if God really had faith in us, he would give us the freedom and the independence to pursue working our own line of living. He doesn't have faith in us. He doesn't even trust us as angels.

So that is back in heaven, per se, that is just an insight. The arguments are the same. Satan hasn't come up with a new set of arguments when the world was created. It is the same arguments that he had way back in the beginning. It is painting God in a certain light.

"How much more those who dwell in the houses of clay whose foundation is in the dust, who is crushed before a moth." He says, Listen, if you think it is bad here in heaven, just look at the universe. He isn't just concerned about keeping us under His thumb. He has got this whole universe lined up with their marching orders and if they don't fall into line he threatens us. That is the kind of God He is. And, listen, I am speaking to you as one who is right next to Him. I am speaking to you as one who has been there and who has talked to Him at length. I have been right next to Him for eons. I thought He was this way, but He is not. He is not the kind of person I used to think He was. He is different.

It is as if you were in a family and the oldest brother in the family who had been your closest confidant the one you could always go to with your problems and then he would go and take those problems to your dad for you. He would represent you. Information flowed through him. And then that older brother whom you have always trusted, the one who played ball with you. The one who took you places. Then he comes to you one day and says, Listen, I've got to share something with you about dad that I never appreciated before. It would carry weight with you. It would have validity in your heart and mind.

And this was the arguments that Satan was presenting. He said, Listen, God is not on our side. I am appealing to you guys to follow me to freedom. I love you guys. I've never steered you wrong through all the eons of time. Trust me just this one more time. I don't care about myself. He may end up killing me, but if I can get your freedom and secure it through my loss, I am willing to do that.

That would make the choice more difficult, wouldn't it? Even up in heaven, God didn't seem approachable. Lucifer seemed approachable. Michael seemed approachable. But God seems a little not quite like us.

Well, how does God respond to that? Of course, the obvious elimination of the opposition which we are all aware would not be a valid solution. It would leave the universe to continue in fear for all eternity if not continued ongoing rebellion.

There is denial. No, no it's is not true. Although what would you expect from someone who is accused to say? Well, it is not true.

You see, God can't just say, I'm God. You are all created. And you need to recognize that fact that I'm the Creator and you are the created and when I say something it goes. And I'm saying that what Lucifer is saying is not true. End of discussion.

Now they may not talk about it again, right? But what is going to be going on through their minds throughout all eternity? He didn't really respond to what Lucifer said, did He? The questions would still remain in their minds seeds to germinate at some time in rebellion.

Ultimately God has to demonstrate over time and in a variety of circumstances that the accusations that Lucifer has made are not true. He just can't make blanket claims.

Because as people mature in their thinking, everyone of us has grown up from our teenage years. Your parents told you things when you were younger. You took it at face value. And as you grew up you began to ask questions. And those questions ultimately could not be answered just by mom and dad saying, I said so. You had to see it. The truth about their saying you had to look both ways before crossing the street had to be demonstrated.

God had to demonstrate the truth. And this is where “the matchless charms of Christ” is so important. God demonstrated the truth of who He was in Jesus.

Hebrews chapter one tells us that God spoke to us in a lot of ways. In various times and in different places through His prophets He spoke to us. There is lots of good things in the Bible. Ways that God has been trying to communicate to us throughout the history of this world, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son who is the glory of His person and the express image of His person. Jesus is the express image of the Father.

2 Corinthians 4 tells the exact same thing. If you have seen Jesus you have seen the Father. Jesus is the express image of the Father’s person. “The brightness of the Father’s glory is manifested in Jesus” we are told.

“All that man needs to know or can know of God has been revealed in the life and character of His Son.” {8T 286.1} That is a very broad statement, taking it all in. So we are going to be up in Heaven for millions of years. We are not going to be there and a billion years down the road suddenly find some new aspect of God. We are not going to think, You know, Jesus never manifested that before.

We are going to be seeing new things, but as we go back and look at Jesus Christ we will say, It was there all the time.

“No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.” John 1:18. When Jesus walked this earth for thirty-three years and we see Him doing and saying things, His thoughts and feelings. Everything that He does it is God doing those things.

If God Himself had come down instead of the Son would His life have been any different?

“Had God the Father come to our world and dwelt among us, humbling Himself, veiling His glory, that humanity might look upon Him, the history that we have of the life of Christ would not have been changed.” {TMK 338.4} There wouldn’t be any difference. You wouldn’t see Him acting differently in different circumstances. You wouldn’t see Him saying different things.

“In every act of Jesus, in every lesson of His instruction, we are to see and hear and recognize God. In sight, in hearing, in effect, it is the voice and movements of the Father.” {TMK 338.4}

When you see Jesus going around healing, it is God doing it. When He stands above Jerusalem weeping saying, How I would have gathered you in as chicks under a hen’s wing, but you weren’t willing, that is God speaking and weeping. When He kneels down and washes the feet of His disciples, including the one who is going to betray Him, and then gets up and sits with dirty feet for the rest of the dinner, that is God. It is not some lesser being.

The fact that He took our nature in its fallen condition doesn’t make Him less divine. He was manifesting in every action what God was like. Why? Because the

great controversy is ultimately about God. That is the answer. That is why the Word had to be made flesh. Because God's claims only carry so much weight for so long. Ultimately those words and those claims have to be manifested and demonstrated. God's thought made audible, the proof of what He said back in Heaven eons ago.

"If you have seen Me you have seen the Father." He says it other ways here. "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father except through Me." John 14:6.

What we always say is, What this means is, God is not going to let you be saved in any other way except claiming Jesus as your Saviour. He's is not going to let you be saved any other way. "No man can come to the Father except through Me." He has defined the methodology and you need to follow that methodology if you want to be saved.

No, what he is saying is, If you want to understand what God is like, there is only one picture. God has spoken to us in a lot of ways and in different times, and they were good. Enoch was a good picture. Moses was a good picture. Elijah was a good picture. But in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, because there is really no other way that we can know actually, perfectly, what He is like.

God is not saying, Listen, you have got to come to Me this way. 1 Cor. 13 tells us that love does not demand its own way. The only way that you can actually, fully, understand who I am and expose the errors that Satan has been perpetrating is by looking at Me in Jesus.

He goes on, "If you had known Me you would have known My Father. From now on you know Him." In fact, you have seen Him. They had seen God. It wasn't some sub-god. It was the real God.

And then Philip, "Lord, show us the Father" and that's what we want to see. We like you. We are attracted to you. You are gentle. We like you. But, just like the angels in heaven, God seems a little different. He is high and lifted up and the smoke fills the temple. Just the train of His robe is all that we can see. He is not like us. Show us the Father.

"Jesus said to him, Have I been with you so long that you have not known me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, Show us the Father?"

"The Father that dwells in Me doeth the works." John 14:10. All throughout Jesus is defining what He does is the works of the Father. What He does is My Father's works. The words that I say, the Father's words. You don't need Ellen White to prove that, but it just confirms it for us.

What is God like in Jesus? "Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me for I am meek and lowly in heart and you will find rest you're your souls." Matthew 11:29. Jesus was clearly meek, gentle, lowly in heart, humble. Is God meek, and humble and gentle and lowly in heart? No, no, no. He is high and lifted up.

Was Jesus humble and meek for thirty-three years? God said, Now listen, Son, you need to go down there and be meek and humble for thirty-three years for two reason: 1) so they will like you and like me by secondary reasons; and 2) to prove to them that they need to be meek and humble.

Or was Jesus manifesting the same character that He had manifested for eternity? And that character was the same character as His Father? He was meek and humble just like His Father. No change in character occurred. Jesus didn't put on humility and meekness for a show for thirty-three years. The character that He developed in this life was the same character that He had throughout all eternity.

"But there was also rivalry among them as to which of them should be considered the greatest. And he said to them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors." Luke 22:24, 25.

This is how things work in the world. This is the principle that guides on things on this planet. People exercise dominion and lordship over other people. There is position and there is subordination and those under them need to toe the line. That's how things are around here.

"But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief [governs], as he that doth serve." Luke 22:24. How is the one in charge supposed to operate? He is supposed to operate as one who serves.

Does God govern as One who serves? God doesn't set up this standard for us and say, You need to govern as one who serves. You need to esteem others greater than yourself. You need to love your enemies. Bless those who curse you. Do good to those who spitefully use you. That's is your job. And my job is to rule. He doesn't set up a different for us than He does for Himself.

Any call in Scripture to us is a manifestation of what God is. That is why the commandments are good news, because they manifest to us what God is like. We tend to focus out attention upon what we are supposed to do and there is value in that, but ultimately those commandments manifest what God is like. "He who governs as He who serves."

"Who is greater, he who sits at the table or he who serves?" Verse 27. How would we answer that question? He who sits at the table or he who serves? "Is it not he who sits at the table?" That is how we would answer the question. Isn't it the one who sits at the table? When you go to a restaurant you place your order. The server brings your food and they are serving you.

"Yet [or but] I am among you as the one who serves." Well that was just for His thirty-three year lifetime, right? God isn't really like that. God governs as one who serves. It is a fundamental reality of His character. Love is bound up in service to others.

When He tells us in Philippians 2 to esteem others greater than ourselves He is manifesting what He has been doing throughout all eternity. He is putting the agenda, the needs, the concerns of others ahead of Himself.

Jesus didn't come down here to put on a show for thirty-three years to convince us that God is a certain way or that we should be a certain way. He came down to manifest exactly what God is like and then being attracted to that we would go and do likewise. Not because we are required to, but because we see something attractive in that. We say, I want to be like that because that is right. We do serve others because it is right.

God is not on top because He has got the biggest muscles. Sometimes we confuse the fact that He has tremendous power, and He does have tremendous power, we confuse that power and think he can't humble, meek and lowly, and esteem others better than Himself, and govern others as One who serves, because power and those qualities don't usually mix.

But the beauty of God is He has all that power and authority blended in a being who is *the* most humble, the meekest, the most gentle being in all the universe. There is no one more like Him than that. Jesus came to manifest that.

Philemon was a slaver owner. He had a slave, Onesimus who ran away to Rome. He came under the influence of Paul. Paul led him to Jesus Christ and Philemon was converted and sent him back to Philemon with a letter and a request. "Therefore though I might be very bold in Christ to command you what is fitting." Philemon 8. As an apostle, as a leader in the church, as a representative of God, I have the authority to command you to do this. I am leadership. You need to respect me. I have the ability and the right to command you to do this.

"Yet for love's sake I rather appeal to you." Philemon 9. He doesn't want to exercise authority over Philemon to command him to take Onesimus back. He is appealing to him. Don't do it because you owe me something. Don't do it because you have to. I am appealing to you "without your consent I want to do nothing that your good deed might not be by compulsion as it were, but voluntary." Philemon 14.

God is not asking us to worship and serve Him because He has got the biggest muscles on the street. The first angel's message is not a threat. "Fear God and give glory to Him for the hour of His judgment is come." You can take that one of two ways. It is either a command that there is judgment coming and if you want to get through it you need to fear God and give glory to Him. Because that is what is going to get you through it. Or you can appreciate that as an appeal from God. Listen, there is an issue of vindication at stake here. I have been accused. And the fear and reverence and glory that you give to Me gives me weight in this universal accusation of Satan. It is either a command and a threat or it is a plea. It is one of those two things.

True worship and true honor can't be commanded. Paul says, I could command you and you would take him back, but in your heart you would still be grinding away, This man ran away from me. It would be eating away at you.

True worship can't be commanded. It does not come that way. It does not come under threat. It does not come under intimidation, coercion. True worship only comes from comes from an appreciation of the one worshiped.

God recognized that way back in the beginning when Lucifer began his charges against God's character. God said the only way these can be demonstrated is by showing who I am. And Jesus is a manifestation of who God is. That is why Philippians 2 tells us that He was God. He was the real deal, but He was willing to give that up and come down to the level of the created being. It is a big gap between the Infinite and the finite, but He made that leap. He had already gone from God to angel. He had already represented God to the angels. Then an even bigger step was representing God to man.

I have to because I want to reveal to you what God is really like. I am going to take that to the full length because if I don't you still won't believe it. And so I will become obedient even to the death of the cross. I will go and reveal to you the ultimate results of Satan's deceptions. I will show you where it leads in order that you will know what it does and then you will know who I am. And in the end we are going to see that self-exaltation and self-concern is a bankrupt reality. And that the law of life for the universe of self-renouncing love is not just the way God makes us live. God isn't requiring us to live by the law of self-renouncing love.

This is why Ellen White makes those outrageous statements that people's exclusion from heaven is voluntary with themselves. Everyone wants to go to Heaven, right? Everyone is going to want to go there voluntarily, right? Well, when they understand the principle guiding this universe is self-renouncing love, when that dawns on their minds, and they have cultivated a mentality that is concern for me. What do I want to do? What is in this for me even if it is in a religious disguise. If that is their mentality, then when it dawns on their minds I have to spend an eternity of service. I could barely endure it for seventy years. It was all I could do to hang on for seventy years being humble and going to the soup kitchen and it was a burden. But I endured it for seventy years because at the end I was supposed to sit on a throne. And it dawns on their mind that service is the way this universe runs and it starts with God. They are not going to want to be there. They would rather die in their selfishness than live serving others forever. That holds no attraction for them. There's nothing good in that for them. Why would they want doing that? They don't want to do it here. Some people endure it because at the end they think there is a pot of gold. But ultimately that has no resonating influence in their hearts. Ultimately, even if they are doing religion it is resonating with Isaiah 14. I want to sit on the throne. I like that verse that says we are going to be ruling and judging angels without understanding what that means. They are not going to want to be there because God is the epitomization of that in the universe. They have nothing in common with Him.

It is good news that God has done something for the whole world. It is good news that it is easy to be saved and hard to be lost. But those tell us first and foremost something good about God. He is the One who is on trial. He is the One who needs to be vindicated. We need to enter into that same experience with Him. Put something on His agenda above our agenda.