

# Contending with God

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Date: 14 December 2023

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Let's turn back for a short time to the chapter we had, Job chapter 9. Job chapter 9, we can also take in verse 5 of chapter 10.

Focusing mainly verses 28 down to chapter 10 verse 5, that section there. As you know, over the last few weeks we take a pause in our usual series.

And the whole month of December we've been seeking to focus upwards. We said at the end of the judges that would be our hope. We spent so long in the mire and so long in the sin of humanity.

We said we want to take a month at least where we have every focus on the incarnation. We've seen that I hope in the evenings with the names and titles of God. During the morning services and the Lord's Day we looked at the people of Jesus and the promises of Jesus this Lord's Day coming.

And this evening I want to see the incarnation as we have it in this chapter in Job. Now, I'm sure you've read Job before and you've read these chapters before, but it struck me this week even reading and even just now reading this chapter again.

[ 1 : 1 8 ] It's a hopeless chapter, isn't it? It's a pretty hopeless chapter. You see Job and you see him in his full honesty. And this is a man who is, as we know, at the very end of all that he has, he is just full honesty to the Lord.

He is speaking as a word here, just brain to mouth. There's no filter. He's speaking to God as he feels, as he sees, as he thinks. And what's glorious is here that in Job we see that God records this down.

Job's conversation of God is recorded. And we know later on, of course, the Lord answers Job back. But Job, although the Lord reminds Job as to his place in the world and his place in the wider creation, at no point does the Lord tell Job off or somehow show wrath against Job for his honesty.

Because Job is saying it as it is. There's times, I'm sure we're all going to echo the words of Job. Life feels so purposeless, so pointless. And in Job, we do see the reality of what it is when, as humans, we feel no way of connecting with God.

And really, we see Jesus in Job in various ways, but in this chapter especially, we see Jesus in how he is opposite to what Job says about God.

[ 2 : 4 7 ] So our hope this evening is, verse 28 down to verse 35, and verse 5 of chapter 10, just three problems that Job has and how we see these problems, these questions, we could say, are answered in Jesus.

The problem of guilt, the problem of distance, and the problem of difference. First of all, the problem of guilt. Verses 28 down to verse 31, we see Job admitting his guilt before the Lord.

I am afraid of my suffering. I know you will not hold me innocent. I shall be condemned. Why then do I labour in vain? If I wash myself with snow and cleanse my hands with lye, of course, that's the caustic part of caustic soap, if I cleanse my hands of the most strong soap that Job could think about, yet you will plunge me into a pit and my own clothes will abhor me.

For John's perspective, there's no answer to his sin. He sees the Lord up there, out there, away from him, and Job has no way of relating to the Lord.

And he knows that the Lord is holy. He knows God cannot behold sin. And Job sees in himself, he is a man who has done wrong. He is a man who has lived in some way a life that has caused sin, as we all have.

[ 4 : 18 ] And he knows that. And we see that he is open, he is honest, he is quite simple here. There's nothing he can do. He can wash himself with snow.

He can scrub his hands and scrub himself with the most caustic, abrasive soap he can find. And of course, yet, he is found in the exact same way.

There is no hope of innocence for Job. He only finds condemnation as he sees his own unholiness compared to the Lord's holiness. He sees his own guilt, he sees his own shame.

He can't cleanse himself, he can't help himself. And he sees that there is only guilt lying before him. There is only condemnation. There is only death ahead of him.

I have become afraid of all my suffering, for I know you will not hold me innocent. I shall be condemned. He is so certain as to what his future holds. Of course, we know that God had not forgotten Job and we know how the story ends, but Job didn't.

[ 5 : 26 ] At this point, poor Job, he is meaning everything he says and he is feeling everything he says. So Job is here and he is saying, well, I've got all this guilt. I know I'm a guilty man. I know I've got this darkness, this sin, and there is nothing I can do to go near you.

God, you are guiltless. How do I approach you? Of course, that's answered in Jesus, one of many examples, but just one verse for us to see how Jesus answers the problem of guilt that Job has.

We covered this chapter before on a Sunday evening, a good few months ago now. 1 John 1, verse 7, Job can't wash himself enough.

Job can't escape the darkness of his sin. And we look forward to Jesus, the one who by his own blood cleanses us from all sin.

Now, this is not for this evening, but just to have in the back of our minds it's important, I hope. Job and us were both saved and are both saved by Jesus.

[ 6 : 43 ] Now, we'll unpack this more in our future Old Testament sermons. Job was saved by looking forward to becoming Messiah. In the same way we are saved by looking back towards what the Messiah accomplished.

When Christ accomplished his work, he fulfilled the full promise of obedience and everything else that enabled Job to be saved as enables us to be saved. It's the same difference. There's caveats and there's explanations but the reality is Job was to be saved by the coming Messiah same as we are saved by the Messiah who came.

But yet, Job at this point he knows he is full of guilt. He knows he can't be saved. But in Jesus, of course, we see there is light first of all. For all the darkness of Job's mind and all the hopelessness of verse 28 down to verse 31 in Jesus we see there is light.

He is, of course, the very source of eternal radiating light. And with Jesus there is the only hope of peace. As we realise in ourselves that we can't save ourselves, we can't wash ourselves, we can never be clean by our own actions.

We see in Jesus he is the one who cleanses us. The blood of Jesus his son cleanses us from all sin. And note there it's not a single wasted words in scripture.

[ 8 : 12 ] How extensive is the cleansing work of Jesus? Cleanses us from all sin. Public and private secret sin we don't want to think about ourselves that we commit.

Sin that we've forgotten we've committed years ago. When we come to put our faith and our hope in Jesus we are cleansed from all sin.

Job certainly lacks no honesty. He's an honest man and he says as it is. And without Jesus, without the understanding of a saviour, Job is clear that there is nothing he can do to cleanse himself.

But in Jesus we see the one who cleanses us from all sin. So Jesus answers the problem of guilt that Job faced. Then Job faced the problem of distance.

We see that down in verse 32. With Job speaking about God, he says, For he is not a man as I am, that I might answer him, that we should come to trial together.

[ 9 : 20 ] There is no arbiter between us who might lay his hand on us both. Job has no way to come close to God.

Yes, he cries out in prayer and yes, he seeks to understand, but Job understands that there is a distance between himself and God and there is nothing he can do.

For all the length of his words, there is nothing he can do to bridge that gap. Yes, for the sacrifice available to him, that sacrifice available to him, it doesn't last forever.

Yes, there is ways he can call out to the Lord, but he has no assurance his voice is to be heard. Of course, we know later on the Lord answers back to Job, but at this point, Job understands the distance between him and God, there is nothing that can be done.

There is no way he can close in on the gap. And the image we have here is that the closer he tries to do it, the harder he tries to close the gap to himself and God, he sees the gap that is widening.

[ 10 : 28 ] For he is not a man as I am, that I might answer him. Job has no way to know that God cares about him. Job has no way to know that God even hears his cries.

There is, in short here, there is no connection between the divine and the profane. There is no connection between the holy and the unholy. There is a distance that cannot be surmounted.

There is a distance that cannot be closed. These poor Job crying out quite honestly. There is no arbiter between us. There is no one to make the peace between us.

There is no way for us to come together and to reason together. The distance is too great. There is no help. There is no hope. Of course, in Jesus we find, quite literally, the answer.

One of many verses. But 1 Timothy 2, verses 5 and 6, I'll read you just now for us, that glorious passage. How does Jesus answer the problem of distance between us and God?

[ 11 : 36 ] For there is one God, and there is one mediator, one arbiter, we could say, between God and man, the man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

Friends, Job had an impossible task of closing the distance. Of course, we know, brothers and sisters, that Jesus came to close that distance for us.

We never have to cry as Christians the cry of Job. We can never cry out, you don't understand what it's like to be human. You don't understand that I can't come close to you. Because through Christ, of course, who gave himself for us, who is the one mediator between God and man, we know that God has made a way.

Job saw no way, and Job was correct. There was no way between God and man, because the way was coming in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the mediator between God and man, the one way of access we have.

As I were, for Job's perspective, the temple curtain, metaphorically speaking, it is still there. It is still separating the Holy of Holies from the people.

[ 12 : 49 ] Of course, when Christ came, we see that curtain torn, and we see the separation between God and his people is bridged in the person of Christ. There is now access to God.

As Christians, we can no longer cry out. We have no reason to ever think again. There is no arbiter between us. We have a mediator. Of course, in his time, we know Job never saw this.

As we said, he was saved by this mediator nonetheless. He looked forward as we look back. That is the glory of this poor man. And the cries of Job, I am sure they echo, brothers and sisters, your cries perhaps in some way before you were saved.

If God, he just feels so far away and there is nothing I can do. My good works fail me. My good deeds fail me. I can't seem to keep anything going for long.

And we see in Jesus, of course, the promise that he himself gave himself as a ransom for all. He himself is the one mediator, the one way we can go to God and know for certain he sees us, he hears us.

[ 14 : 04 ] So Jesus solves the problem as well of distance. the eternal distance which cannot be bridged by us. Jesus, of course, made that distance in that he came down and became like us.

Which brings us to the third and final problem. Jumping to chapter 10 here, but the same argument continues by Job. Chapter 10 verse 5, a very simple verse. Verse 4, 2, bring in verse 4, 2, verse 4 and verse 5 together.

Where Job says to God, Have you eyes of flesh? Do you see as a man sees? Are your days of the days of man or are your years as a man's years?

And we see already, I hope where we're going with this. Job has a difference problem. He is almost saying to God here, quite simply, and Job is speaking honestly, you just don't know what it's like to be us.

You made us, yes, but the pain and agony we go through as your creatures at times, you have no way of knowing that you are God in glory and we're on the earth and we suffer.

[ 15 : 16 ] You haven't got eyes, you don't see the world as we see it. You haven't got a finite number of days, you're eternal, you can't understand what it's like to live in this world as your created beings.

There is no way you can begin to relate to our human suffering, you have no way of knowing that. Of course, quite simply, I won't prolong it because we know where we're going, we've got plenty of verse we can come to for this one, but we come to the very first chapter of John, John 1, we're told quite simply, the word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only son who came from the father, full of grace and truth. we have a saviour who does have eyes of flesh, who did see as a man sees, who did live days as our days are lived, and whose life did have an end.

We have a saviour who lived as the incarnate son of God. And here we see the incarnation of Jesus so beautiful in the questions of Job. Quite simply, Job is saying to God, you're not human.

You never understand what it is to be human. How can you care for us? And God shows that care. We were discussing today about this earlier on and we're seeing it's amazing.

[ 17 : 04 ] God lets Job say all this. Of course, God knew the plan from eternity past. The plan is set, the saviour would come and as Job cries out these painful agonised cries to God, God knows in his plan the son is going to be sent to be born of a virgin, to have flesh and have eyes and ears and be born of a baby useless and helpless and crying and needing fed and needing change and anything else.

A real normal life. So that verse 4 and verse 5 can be answered. We have a God who was clothed in humanity quite literally.

Gregory, an old saint here, Gregory of Nazianzus who said many things, many things are very complicated, but one of the things he said which is glorious, he spoke much about the incarnation and he says about Jesus, he remained what he was, what he was not he assumed or he put on.

He remained what he was, what he was not, he put on. In other words, of course, he lost none of his power, none of his glory, of course, but he laid these things aside for the time of his incarnation.

He didn't lose any of it, he had full access to it at times, but he laid it aside and he assumed what he was not, he assumed human flesh, he assumed human life, he put on full humanity.

[ 18 : 38 ] Quite simply, as we often hear this time of year, the immortal put on for a time. The immortal, I should say, the immortal took on mortality.

The immortal clothed himself in mortality. And as John says here, he tabernacled with us, he made his dwelling with us, he tabernacled, he lived so closely with us.

And more glorious than perhaps even Job could ever have imagined, Christ would return as he left. He left as fully human and fully man, and he would return the same way.

He has in himself the full humanity that he took on. Out of his love for his people, he has lost none of that. We will see him as he is. We will see a saviour, yes, he is perfected and his post-resurrection body, but he is still in a body.

It takes what Job is saying here to even more glorious levels. He did not just take on human flesh for a time, he remains fully God, fully man, for all time.

[ 20 : 01 ] Out of love for his people. So that we know at this moment we have a high priest who indeed does see as we see, who indeed lived a life as we live, who is faced with all the temptations and trials of his life as we are, without sin, who can understand and come alongside us as saviour, as king, as older brother, as friend, and know that we never cry out as Job did, Lord, you don't know, because he does know.

The questions that Job faced, the questions of his guilt without help, of the distance without closing, of difference without association, all these things are answered quite beautifully and quite simply in Jesus.

There is a series for us, I'm sure, in each one of these points, but just for encouragement this evening, there's nothing new for us here, but just to bring our minds this midweek session to lift our heads upwards and be reminded of the beauty of the incarnation, where we have a saviour who loves us enough to take on human flesh, to live, to suffer, to die, and have love for his people, who gave his precious blood the ransom for his people, so we can know for certain we have a great high priest to send us into glory with the right hand of the father who knows us, but more than that, who knows what it is to be like us and who loves us.