

# OpenTheo

## April 12th: Job 10 & Hebrews 2

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Created in order cruelly to be destroyed? A little while lower than the angels.

Reflections upon the readings from the ACNA Book of Common Prayer (<http://bcp2019.anglicanchurch.net/>).

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## Transcript

Job 10. I loathe my life. I will give free utterance to my complaint.

I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. I will say to God, Do not condemn me. Let me know why you contend against me.

Does it seem good to you to oppress, to despise the work of your hands, and favour designs of the wicked? Have you eyes of flesh? Do you see as man sees? Are your days as the man's years, that you seek out my iniquity and search for my sin, although you know that I am not guilty, and there is none to deliver out of your hand? Your hands fashioned and made me, and now you have destroyed me altogether. Remember that you have made me like clay, and will you return me to the dust? Did you not pour me out like milk, and curdle me like cheese? You clothed me with skin and flesh, and knit me together with bones and sinews. You have granted me life and steadfast love, and your care has preserved my spirit.

Yet these things you hid in your heart. I know that this was your purpose. If I sin, you watch me, and do not acquit me of my iniquity.

If I am guilty, woe to me. If I am in the right, I cannot lift up my head, for I am filled with disgrace, and look on my affliction. And were my head lifted up, you would hunt me like a lion, and again work wonders against me.

You renew your witnesses against me, and increase your vexation toward me. You bring fresh troops against me. Why did you bring me out from the womb? Would that I had died before any eye had seen me, and were as though I had not been, carried from the womb to the grave.

Are not my days few? Then cease, and leave me alone, that I may find a little cheer before I go, and I shall not return to the land of darkness and deep shadow, the land of gloom like thick darkness, like deep shadow without any order, where light is as thick darkness. In Job chapter 10, Job concludes the response to Bildad the Shuhite's first speech to him. However, by the point of chapter 10, he is almost entirely addressing God.

He asks God to cease holding him guilty. As he clearly has been holding him guilty in his judgments of him to this point, he appeals to God as if God were a man to tell him why he has a case against him. What issue does God have with Job? He puzzles over the motives of God.

Does God simply have no care for his creations? Perhaps God handles mankind like a petulant child destroys his playthings. Does God derive some pleasure or satisfaction from oppression? Is God just limited in his vision, like a human being might be, perhaps not perceiving the truth of the situation? Is God merely a mortal of short lifespan, who is in some hurry to pursue and punish Job's sin, lest Job outlive him? To ask such questions is instantly to rule them out. But if such explanations be ruled out, what is Job to make of God's motivations in his suffering? The Lord seems determined to find Job guilty, but Job is not guilty, and so Job seems doomed to be in the hands of a God who is in a futile quest to find some grievous fault in him when there is none.

In Psalm 139 verses 13-16, the Psalmist describes his formation in the womb. Here, in verses 8-12, Job describes his formation by God in the womb. He speaks of how, as a human being, he was formed from the clay.

With the image of being poured out like milk and curdle like cheese, Job seems to have in mind the earliest formation of the child in the womb, the insemination of the womb, and the early growth of the embryo. Following that is his clothed with skin and flesh, knit together with bones and sinews. Prior to the advent of modern imaging technology, this vision of the human person being formed in the womb is a wonderful one, describing the miraculous, marvellous and mysterious origins of the human body.

To his initial formation of Job's body, God added his gift of life and the steadfast love that preserved Job and his existence. Yet this all takes an ugly form. These great wonders of God done in the formation and preservation of Job seem to have been undertaken for some sadistic purpose.

Job has been created merely in order that he might be destroyed. God has undertaken so much care in fashioning Job from the dust, merely to return him to the dust. Job's words here are understandably bitter.

Even though they are not his last words or the full expression of his spirit and its different contrary feelings, they are nonetheless deeply and painfully felt. Is it merely the case that all of the grace that he has received from the Lord's hand is but a mask for a hostile intention? Is God merely like the accuser, looking for some grounds upon which to persecute Job? His watch over Job is not the watch of preservation, but a watch designed to find fault and to excuse hostile treatment. However, given the settled nature of God's hostile intent towards him, Job feels that even if he did assert his innocence, the Lord would bring shame upon him nonetheless.

The Lord is like a lion seeking to devour Job. He has already worked his wonders against Job with the great mighty wind, and more particularly with the fire of God that came down from heaven. His boils might also be related to a striking with leprosy, a signal affliction that on several occasions in scripture is seen as something that comes as a mark of divine judgment.

The disasters that befell Job could not merely be attributed to chance. Besides the fact that the odds would be astronomical, they had the fingerprints of God all over them. It is unmistakable.

God has clearly set himself as Job's enemy. This is a settled disposition of hostility on God's part, and Job feels utterly powerless to change it. Job concludes his speech picking up some of the themes of his initial curse and lament from chapter 3. He asks God why he brought him out of the womb.

Why not simply allow him to die in there? As he's argued before, he's a mortal with a short lifespan. Why should the Lord be so concerned with punishing him when he will soon pass away in death? If the Lord would simply leave him alone, he might enjoy just a bit of relief. Faced with the prospect of continuing to be a creature in the hands of a callous God, Job longs for the state of decreation or uncreation, for a return to that primordial state that preceded the original word of God in creation.

Enveloped in that darkness and dissolved into that chaos, Job might finally enjoy some relief in oblivion. A question to consider, what are some examples of places in scripture where God comes as an enemy to the righteous? Hebrews chapter 2 Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not

yet see everything in subjection to him, but we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering, for he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, I will tell of your name to my brothers, in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise, and again I will put my trust in him, and again, behold, I and the children God has given me. Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. But because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Hebrews began with a grand presentation of the glory of Christ as the exalted and eternally supreme Son, far greater than any of the angels. In chapter 2, however, the author turns to the questions of the appropriate response to this. If Christ indeed is far more than merely one of the heavenly beings, being God himself, then the manner of people's response to his work is a matter of so much greater significance.

Seeing the faithful suffering of Jesus the Messiah is important. However, without a robust account of the fact that Christ came from the heights of heaven, that he is the one through whom the creation was made, and the one who is the unique son of the Father, and the fact of his ascension over all other powers, the true significance of Christ's suffering simply will not be recognised. The author of Hebrews wants his hearers to be in no doubt as to the power and exaltation of Christ, and what this means.

Christ isn't just another in the line of the martyrs, for instance. He is the Lord of all. Knowledge of Christ's exalted power is not something that we can gain by sight.

Although Christ's sufferings occurred in the realm of sight, knowing of his exaltation requires heeding the spoken message that has been delivered to us in the Gospel. The greater revelation that we have received through the Eternal Son, a revelation that exceeds the revelation given through the prophets in past times, should lead us to pay much closer attention. It can be very easy to forget the exaltation of Christ in the situations of our lives, especially when we face resistance and persecution.

However, once we have this reality clearly in our awareness, everything else takes on an

added gravity. The angels had been involved in delivering the message of the law at Sinai, a word that had been reliable and enforced with divine judgment. The message brought by the Eternal Son is of a far greater significance.

It isn't a message merely delivered by emissaries, lesser messengers, and various other intermediaries such as angels and prophets. It is delivered by the Son in person. The message of the Son was then corroborated by the message of the apostles and other witnesses of his earthly ministry, who testified to its truth.

Their message was confirmed by the accompanying witness of divinely given signs with their teaching. Signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts of the Spirit were part of the means by which the apostolic teaching was divinely confirmed. This seems to have been especially important in the foundational period of the Church's life.

After churches were established and the New Testament scriptures completed and widely accessible, such signs, wonders, and miracles seemed to become less prominent. In verses 3-4 we see each of the persons of the Trinity as well, all involved in the work of witnessing to the message of the Gospel. First of all the Son declares the message in person, then the Father bears witness with signs, and the gifts of the Spirit also testify.

The author of Hebrew turns back to his treatment of the Son in relationship to the angels at this point. The book began with the Son exalted above all of the angels. However now we will see the Son taking a position lower than the angels.

Exploring the nature and the importance of the relationship between the Son's states of exaltation and his state of humiliation, the author will be able to strengthen his point. The angels are exalted but they are not going to rule the world to come. As the Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 6 verse 3, do you not know that we are to judge angels? That privilege of rule belongs to humanity in the Messiah.

He quotes Psalm 8 verses 3-6, when I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place. What is man that you are mindful of him, and the Son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings, and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands.

You have put all things under his feet. This great statement probably relates primarily to the Davidic King. The Psalm is not about the exaltation of the generic human being, but of the representative man, the Davidic King of the people.

It is about God establishing the King as his Son in the Davidic covenant and establishing his rule over all of his works through him. The reference of the quotation is to Christ. Christ fulfills the meaning of Psalm 8. He was made lower than the angels for a period of time, but has now been exalted to the throne, everything placed in subjection under his

feet.

However, although Christ has been exalted in this way, it isn't visible to us yet. Not everything seems to be under his feet. Indeed, the claim that Christ is the exalted Lord of all seems to go against all appearances.

However, what we do see is Jesus. He is the one who was made lower than the angels. He was seen and heard by many witnesses.

We now also perceive by faith that he has won the victory through his death and is crowned with glory and honor. Visible appearances alone will be deceptive. A fuller understanding of who Christ is and the nature of his work will make apparent the fact that he, as the one given by God for the purpose, enters into the reality of death and deals with it for everyone.

Christ is the founder of our salvation. He is a great conquering hero who leads the way. He goes before his people.

He was the one who founded the world, and now he has also founded our deliverance through his suffering. He brings many sons to glory, and in so doing, he pioneers the path that they will have to walk. This is the appropriate way that things should be.

The way of the Son is the way of the deliverance of the many sons. The Son is made perfect through suffering. It is the means by which he attains to true maturity, and the people of God will also be brought to their maturity in a similar manner.

The Son fully enters into our condition so that in entering into his life, we might be rescued from the power of death within it. Christ is one with humanity. He does not just stand between God and humanity as a sort of intermediary being.

He is fully divine and fully human. He is our brother and speaks of us as his brothers. The quotation from Psalm 22 verse 22, I will tell of your name to my brothers in the midst of the congregation, I will praise you, is from the most famous Psalm speaking of the Messiah's suffering and victory.

It is the principal Psalm that is found on Jesus's lips on the cross. The gospel writers also allude to on several occasions in their crucifixion accounts. Like the verses that follow from Isaiah chapter 8 verse 17 and verse 18, they present the victorious Christ surrounded by the human beings he has delivered, with himself as their champion, their chief, their forerunner, and their redeemer.

He sings in victory as one of them, leading them in song. He trusts in the Lord as one of them. We'll see later on that he is the author and the perfecter of faith.

He presents them as people given to him by God as his children. From speaking of the

Son chiefly as the hero and forerunner, the author moves to the Son as the deliverer. The children given to him were under the dominion of the one with the power of death.

So in order to deliver them from it, the Son entered into their condition. While the devil does not ultimately have the power to give or to take life of his own accord, death is destruction and the devil is the destroyer. Death, even though introduced by God, is a means by which the devil can achieve his purposes.

The thrall of any power also is generally wielded much more through fear than it is through direct coercional force. The power of death that keeps us in slavery is mostly the fear of death. If people stop fearing the punishments of a king, that king will lose his power.

Even if the punishments might still occur, people will far more readily rebel against him. Christ disarms the devil chiefly in his power of wielding fear. By openly overcoming the finality of the power of death and destruction that the devil boasts in, that power ceases to terrify as it once did.

Former prisoners can now rise up and people can be set free. Christ's identification with and deliverance of the prisoners and the hostages of death and the devil is exclusive to human beings. Angels have not received such a salvation.

The Son is also a high priest in addition to being this hero and liberator. In order to be effective as such, he needs to be one of us, able truly to act as our representative. Through his suffering he has experienced the extent of the human condition, so he is one to whom we can turn in our struggles.

A question to consider. What are some examples of the ways in which the devil wields his power over us through the fear of death?