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April 21st: Job 19 & Hebrews 10:1-18

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I know that my redeemer lives. Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired.

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Transcript

Job 19. Then Job answered and said, How long will you torment me, and break me in pieces with words? These ten times you have cast reproach upon me. Are you not ashamed to wrong me? And even if it be true that I have erred, my error remains with myself.

If indeed you magnify yourselves against me, and make my disgrace an argument against me, know then that God has put me in the wrong, and closed his net about me. Behold, I cry out, Violence! but I am not answered. I call for help, but there is no justice.

He has walled up my way, so that I cannot pass, and he has set darkness upon my paths. He has stripped from me my glory, and taken the crown from my head. He breaks me down on every side, and I am gone, and my hope has he pulled up like a tree.

He has kindled his wrath against me, and counts me as his adversary. His troops come on together, they have cast up their siege ramp against me, and encamp around my tent. He has put my brothers far from me, and those who knew me are wholly estranged from me.

My relatives have failed me, my close friends have forgotten me, the guests in my house, and my maidservants count me as a stranger. I have become a foreigner in their eyes. I call to my servant, but he gives me no answer.

I must plead with him with my mouth for mercy. My breath is strange to my wife, and I am a stench to the children of my own mother. Even young children despise me, when I rise they talk against me.

All my intimate friends abhor me, and those whom I loved have turned against me. My bones stick to my skin and to my flesh, and I have escaped by the skin of my teeth. Have mercy on me, have mercy on me, O you my friends, for the hand of God has touched me.

Why do you, like God, pursue me? Why are you not satisfied with my flesh? O that my words were written, O that they were inscribed in a book, O that with an iron pen and lead they were engraved in the rock for ever. For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will stand upon the earth, and after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me.

If you say, How we will pursue him? and The root of the matter is found in him. Be afraid of the sword, for wrath brings the punishment of the sword, that you may know there is a judgment. Job chapter 19 is Job's second speech within the second cycle of dialogues.

He begins by reproaching his friends for their part in his distress. By their accusations they have exacerbated Job's position. To the heavy blows that Job had received from the Lord, they added their false accusations.

Supposing he had done something wrong, the fault was between him and God, and yet the friends are so eager to prosecute Job's fault, presenting themselves also as the appropriate arbiters of his case. To their eyes the evidence against Job is damning. What has befallen his family and household, and his own physical condition, all testify against him, that he is clearly in the wrong, this is a man struck by the Lord.

Job presents his protest in verses 6-12. He is a man cornered, besieged, trapped by God. By his brutal actions against him, God has clearly presented Job as standing in the wrong.

Job can call out in his distress and in his sense of injustice, but there is no one to answer him. His appeal won't be heard. The Lord has hemmed him in, walling up his way.

Like an overthrown king, he has been stripped of his glory and crown. Like a defeated city whose fortifications have been broken down, the walls of Job's life have been breached. What hope he may have had has been uprooted like a tree.

God is not just silent towards Job. All of his actions speak volumes. God is treating Job as an enemy, not just as someone who is ignored.

And God's actions against Job are completely disproportionate. He is surrounded by siege works, and as it were encircled by an army. But yet, in verse 12, he presents himself as no more than a tent.

This is most extreme overkill. Throughout Job's complaints, it's important to notice that his concern is vindication and divine action on his behalf. He's not merely looking for a relief of his suffering.

The greater part of his distress is not just his physical pain and his loss of his household and his children. It is the fact that he clearly stands under divine condemnation. A blameless and an upright man who fears God and eschews evil is cast off and cast out by the Lord, presented as wicked and to be rejected.

Besides the Lord's rejection, the Lord has brought about his rejection by all the other people of his society. Job's kin and his former acquaintances are now estranged from him. They avoid him.

They ignore him, as the friends when they first visited seemed to have ignored Job, refusing to acknowledge him. People who once would have looked to him as a generous host or a kind master now treat him as a stranger. His servant no longer recognizes his authority and needs to be pleaded with for mercy.

His breath, or perhaps his spirit, is strange even to his own wife. You can think back to chapter 2, verse 9. Then his wife said to him, Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die. He is abhorrent to the children of his mother, or perhaps even his own children.

Although given the events of chapter 1, this more likely refers to his siblings. Even young children, who would be the lowest within the social structure, and would be without many of the social prejudices that adults had, despise him. When he rises up, he looks in their direction and he sees them talking about him.

The people who were once nearest and dearest to him have now risen against him. They regard him as an outcast, a stranger, even an enemy. It did not suffice that the Lord attacked him with his bitter blows.

In addition to all of this, he conscripted all of these people who were closest to Job, the people that Job looked to and depended upon, to join his cause against Job. This is bitter

for Job indeed. Job's own body seems to have turned against him.

And Job wonders at his friends. Why they pursue him. Isn't it enough for God to pursue him? Why do they also seem to need their pound of flesh? Back in chapter 9, verse 33, Job had spoken of his wish that there were someone to go between, him and God, a mediator, an arbiter, someone to present his case perhaps.

There is no arbiter between us who might lay his hand on us both. In chapter 16, verses 19 to 21, Job had again wished for a witness. In Norman Harville's translation, In chapter 14, verses 13 to 17, he had expressed his wish that he be hidden in Sheol until the time would come when he would be raised up and vindicated.

In verses 23 and 24, Job wishes that his case could be written down in the most indelible way. Inscribed with an iron pen on rock, so that it would endure forever. So that Job would not just vanish from the earth.

The injustice that he has suffered, forgotten. He wants it to be written in a book. Indeed, we are reading such a book.

A book that records Job's situation. Verses 25 to 26 are some of the most famous verses in the book, but also some of the most difficult. A great deal of ink has been spilled on the question of what exactly is meant by these verses.

Who is the Redeemer for instance? Claiming that the Redeemer is God seems strange, given the fact that Job is making his case against God at this point. The Redeemer is more likely some third party, perhaps comparable to the accuser Satan that we see in the first two chapters. Looking at passages such as Zechariah chapter 3, it seems to me that the figure is most likely going to be the angel of the Lord.

Job probably envisages a member of the divine council who will speak on his behalf. And while he has previously hoped for such justice to occur before he dies, here it seems that he expects to die before such a thing happens. However, the Redeemer lives.

The Redeemer is a figure in the Old Testament who would continue the life of the family when it was put into threat or jeopardy. He would restore property to the family. He would avenge the blood of one slain in the family.

He would marry the surviving widow of a brother that had died in order to continue his name. Job is hoping for such a figure to act on his behalf, a heavenly figure who will intercede for him, who will continue his name when it seems to be wiped out. This figure will, as it were, stand over Job's grave.

After Job has rotted away, he will present his case. And then Job, the greatest surprise of all, will see God in his flesh. This does not seem to be a mere spiritual vision or a mere imagination or dream.

This is Job being raised up. His case will be heard. Justice will be done.

And he will see God face to face. With his own eyes, he will see God. This is not a general hope of resurrection.

This is a particular hope of resurrection that applies to Job's specific situation. Job is seeking justice and he believes that some sort of post-mortem justice will occur. The profound faith exhibited here should stand out to us.

This is a hope of resurrection founded upon confidence in the moral governance of the universe. That justice will ultimately be done, even if this requires dead bodies to be raised. A question to consider.

How could Job be read as a type of Christ? And how does Job's hope anticipate Christ's redemption? Hebrews chapter 10 verses 1 to 18 But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year, for it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me. In burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure.

Then I said, Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book. When he said above, You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings, these are offered according to the law. Then he added, Behold, I have come to do your will.

He does away with the first in order to establish the second. And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.

But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us, for after saying, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord.

I will put my laws on their hearts and write them on their minds. Then he adds, I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more. Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

Chapter 9 ended with Christ once for all dealing with sins in the heavenly places themselves, opening the way to God that was once closed off in a manner symbolized by the lack of access to the most holy place in the earthly tabernacle. In the opening verses of chapter 10 he drives the point home. The law of Moses and its ceremonies had only an anticipatory shadow of the realities that have been brought in by Christ.

The most holy place of the tabernacle was not the heavenly reality of God's throne, but an earthly symbolic representation. All of the sacrifices performed in the old sanctuary could not ultimately perfect the worshippers, bringing them to the clearly intended goal of the system. The old covenant was Sisyphean.

It had to repeat the same cycle again and again and again, year by year, while never actually attaining to its goal of decisively dealing with sin and bringing the worshipper into the presence of God. Had it done so, the sacrifices wouldn't have continually been offered. The worshippers would no longer have needed repeated reminders of their sin.

The sacrificial system constantly brought sin and the division that it caused to the forefront of the worshippers' consciousness. However, with the offering of Christ, the burden of sins upon the worshippers' consciousness can be removed. The obstacle of our sins needs no longer be a constant preoccupation when the true way into God's presence has been secured.

This contrasts markedly with the old covenant, in which year after year there were repeated reminders of that obstacle of sin, a constant nagging recollection of the barrier between God and humanity that had not been lifted. And while the blood of bulls and goats offered a symbolic cleansing of the body, they could never truly take away sins and deal with the deeper reality of sin that obstructed people's access to God's heavenly presence. Christianity talks a lot about the blood of Christ and other such things.

Some people can think of this as if the physical blood of Jesus has quasi-magical properties. However, blood was always a symbolic manifestation or representation of something more fundamental. One's blood is one's life, especially one's life laid down or offered or transmitted in some manner.

The use of the physical substance of blood helps us to communicate or to understand the more fundamental reality of the transmission of the qualities of someone's life and death to others. Likewise, the concept of animal sacrifice always related to the communication and offering of oneself and one's works to God. The author of Hebrews makes this point by quoting Psalm 40 verses 6-8 as if it were the statement of Christ just before taking human flesh.

Animal sacrifices were unable to deal with sins and to establish righteousness. They constantly recalled the presence of an obstacle and the need for something to deal with it. And while they might symbolize the solution, they were unable to effect that solution themselves.

They were not ultimately pleasing to God. God wanted something more, the true obedience and self-offering of human life. David's words to the Lord in the Psalm are most fully realized in his greater son, who accomplishes the true will of God by coming to render the true service and human offering that the sacrifices were unable to achieve.

The author of Hebrews tweaks the verse to strengthen his sermon point. The original text reads, In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted, but you have given me an open ear, burnt offering and sin offering you have not required. Then I said, behold, I have come.

In the scroll of the book it is written of me. I delight to do your will, O my God. Your law is within my heart.

Verse 6 more literally reads, ears you have prepared for me, which Hebrews expresses as a body you have prepared for me. Perhaps the author of Hebrews is wanting his hearers to hear that divergence from the original text and to recognize that he is unpacking the point of the original. The open ear or the prepared ears are bodily instruments given and prepared by God for obedience.

Christ in his incarnation realizes and more gloriously fulfills what the psalmist is speaking of and the author of Hebrews tweaking of the verse makes this more apparent. It reinforces his argument. The body of Christ's incarnation is a God given means of his full obedience to the will of God.

It's a means by which what God always most deeply desired from humanity can be realized. God the Son became man in order that the will of God might be fulfilled in true human obedience. The law of God is within his heart.

This was written of in the scroll of the book, which now refers not merely to the law of kingship or even to the Pentateuch more generally, but to the entire Old Testament, which anticipates or speaks of its expected fulfillment in the obedience of one who is to come. When such human obedience is offered and we are by the spirit caught up in the slipstream of Christ, animal sacrifices and offerings are no longer needed and indeed they can be done away with. The once for all decisive and final offering has now occurred.

Animal sacrifices are nullified now that the true human obedience that the law always anticipated and awaited and desired has been established. And now the author of Hebrews is at a point to return triumphantly to the point at which he began. But now we have the eyes to see its true wonder and glory.

The Levitical priests are engaged in that Sisyphean task of repeatedly offering the same sacrifices, sacrifices that are ultimately futile in the task of taking away sins. However, Christ offered a single efficacious sacrifice for sins, achieving once for all what the old repeated sacrifices were unable to do, no matter how much they strive towards it. Having offered this once for all sacrifice, he can now sit down at the right hand of God in the position of intimacy.

He enjoys all the prerogatives of sonship and rule. He waits for all things to be subjected

to him, to be placed beneath his feet. The great contrast here is one of posture between the Levitical priests who stand daily at their service and Christ who is seated.

Their work is never completely done. However, Christ's work is truly complete and as a result he has entered into his rest at God's right hand in fulfillment of Psalm 110 verse 1, the verse concerning the ascension of the one who is eternally the priest according to the order of Melchizedek. He now awaits the final judgment as all enemies and opponents are subdued under his feet.

He constantly intercedes for us from his position of rule as through and in us his enemies are overcome. Recognising the efficacy of Christ's once for all sacrifice is imperative for our understanding of the Christian faith. The old sacrifices could never take away sins but the offering of Christ has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

The pollution and the guilt of sin have been decisively dealt with and we now have access to God. We have been made holy. However, Christ's work is also continuous and progressive as we are being conformed over time to the reality of who he is and what he has achieved for us.

We have been perfected but we are also being sanctified. We must continue to participate in Christ, growing into full possession of him and of his life. All of the things the author of Hebrews has written of are witnessed to by the promise of the new covenant in Jeremiah chapter 31.

There are two parts of this promise, speaking both of the dealing with the principle of sin within the people of God and dealing with the guilt and condemnation of sin. Christ in his self-offering deals with both of these things. His self-offering deals with the condemnation of death that lies upon humanity as he takes up the destiny of humanity within himself and bears its sin.

Christ is also the word or the law made flesh, the complete incarnation of the will of God. By the communication of his life by the spirit to us, this writing of the law upon the heart, the enfleshing of the will of God, becomes a reality for us too. The attentive reader of scripture will have noticed earlier that when the author of Hebrews quotes Psalm 40, he cuts off at the end of verse 7. But verse 8, which a biblically literate hero would have been familiar with, is the real powerful verse.

I delight to do your will, O my God, your law is within my heart. The true obedience of David's greater son is the means by which the new covenant will be fulfilled. A question to consider.

What might we learn from the way that the author of Hebrews uses the Old Testament within this passage?