

# OpenTheo

## April 15th: Job 13 & Hebrews 4:14—5:10

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Job wants to deal face to face with God. Christ's suitability as high priest.

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## Transcript

Job chapter 13 Behold, my eye has seen all this, my ear has heard and understood it. What ye know I also know. I am not inferior to you, but I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to argue my case with God.

As for you, you whitewash with lies. Worthless physicians are you all. Oh, that you would keep silent, and it would be your wisdom.

Hear now my argument, and listen to the pleadings of my lips. Will you speak falsely for God, and speak deceitfully for Him? Will you show partiality toward Him? Will you plead the case for God? Will it be well with you when He searches you out? Or can you deceive Him as one deceives a man? He will surely rebuke you, if in secret you show partiality. Will not His Majesty terrify you, and the dread of Him fall upon you? Your maxims are proverbs of ashes, your defences are defences of clay.

Let me have silence, and I will speak, and let come on me what may. Why should I take flesh in my teeth, and put my life in my hand? Though He slay me, I will hope in Him, yet I will argue my ways to His face. This will be my salvation, that the Godless shall not come before Him.

Keep listening to my words, and let my declaration be in your ears. Behold, I have prepared my case, I know that I shall be in the right. Who is there who will contend with me? For then I would be silent and die.

Only grant me two things, then I will not hide myself from your face. Withdraw your hand far from me, and let not dread of you terrify me. Then call, and I will answer, or let me speak, and you reply to me.

How many are my iniquities and my sins? Make me know my transgression and my sin. Why do you hide your face, and count me as your enemy? Will you frighten a driven leaf, and pursue dry chaff? For you write bitter things against me, and make me inherit the iniquities of my youth. You put my feet in the stocks, and watch all my paths.

You set a limit for the soles of my feet. Man wastes away like a rotten thing, like a garment that is moth-eaten. Job chapter 13 continues the speech of Job that concludes the first cycles of dialogues.

It marks a decisive turn in Job's position. Job had formerly lamented the impossibility of effectively making a case with God. In chapter 9 verses 2 and 3 he had said, Truly I know that it is so.

But how can a man be in the right before God? If one wished to contend with him, one could not answer him once in a thousand times. And in verses 14 to 20 of that chapter, How then can I answer him, choosing my words with him? Though I am in the right, I cannot answer him. I must appeal for mercy to my accuser.

If I summoned him, and he answered me, I would not believe that he was listening to my voice. For he crushes me with a tempest, and multiplies my wounds without cause. He will not let me get my breath, but fills me with bitterness.

If it is a contest of strength, behold, he is mighty. If it is a matter of justice, who can summon him? Though I am in the right, my own mouth would condemn me. Though I am blameless, he would prove me perverse.

However in this chapter Job turns to advance just such a legal case with God. He is prepared to risk everything in such an endeavor. The opening five verses of this chapter, with chapter 12 verses 2-4, bookend Job's opening challenge to his friends, and the ironic doxology on the inscrutable and dread wisdom of God at the end of the preceding chapter.

Job appeals to first-hand wisdom, which trumps the wisdom that his friends have to offer. His statement in verse 2, What you know I also know, I am not inferior to you, picks up the words of chapter 12 verse 3. But I have understanding as well as you, I am not inferior to you. Who does not know such things as these? Norman Harbell reads verse 4 of the preceding chapter, I am the one marked by his friends as the one who summons God for an answer.

Yes, marked as the guiltless righteous one. While Job had earlier appealed against God's judgment, now he does so more formally and directly. He calls out to a higher court than that of the friends, wanting to argue his case with God himself, wanting to arraign the Almighty.

He presents a sharp and scathing dismissal of his friends. They have covered up the truth like whitewash. They have offered no remedy or solve for his distress.

He wishes that the friends would remain silent. If they would only do so, they would be more wise than they were in speaking out in a situation they did not understand. Proverbs chapter 17 verse 28 speaks of such situations.

Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise. When he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent. By speaking out, Job's friends had only displayed their ignorance, their inability to understand the true nature of his situation.

The friends had presumed to speak on God's behalf. They seek to justify God and to condemn Job. In taking God's side of the matter, they presume that they cannot be gainsaid by anyone.

However, Job attacks that assumption. Although they are trying to speak on God's behalf, they are doing so in a way that is unrighteous. With lies, they are showing partiality.

What will become of them when God shows up to inspect the case and to test their words? The words of the friends are worthless, and when the Lord searches them out, they will be exposed as such. They will be rebuked by him, and his majesty will terrify them. Though they may claim an ancient pedigree, Job describes their maxims as proverbs of ashes, and their arguments on God's behalf as defences of clay.

In summoning the Lord for a hearing, Job is taking his life in his own hands. Yet he is prepared to take the risk. God may indeed slay him, but what does he have to lose? He isn't holding out any great hope, but this will be the course that he will take.

Rather than suffering the dread and inscrutable providences of a God veiled in darkness, Job would deal with God face to face. The beginning of verse 15 has been famously translated as, Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. However, it is more likely to be properly read as a statement that the Lord may indeed kill him, and that he isn't holding

out much hope.

The one thread that Job holds on to for his assurance is his own innocence. It is this that leads him to seek a showdown with God. A guilty man would not seek God's face in such a manner.

While his own case is a strong one, Job still has misgivings. He had earlier expressed in chapter 9 the way that the Lord could just overwhelm him with his majesty. At the end of chapter 9 in verses 33 to 35, he had said, There is no arbiter between us who might lay his hand on us both.

Let him take his rod away from me, and let not dread of him terrify me. Then I would speak without fear of him, for I am not so in myself. This fear of divine intimidation makes it very difficult for Job to approach the Lord face to face.

He asked the Lord in verses 20 and 21 that he would restrain his dread and his terror so that Job could actually deal with him directly. In such an encounter, it could go either way. The Lord could present his case against Job, and Job could answer.

Or Job could present his concerns to the Lord, and the Lord could answer him. In verse 23, we see that Job presumes that the Lord will address him, with the Lord playing the part of the plaintiff. Rather than inflicting the Kafkaesque judgement that Job had experienced, Job wants God to come out into the open, to present his charge against Job formally and explicitly.

He desires God to express why he has been judging him in the way that he has. Why is God so battering with his judgements and mere mortal? Is he judging Job for the inadvertent sins of his youth? God is treating Job like an oppressor would treat his adversary, not giving him a fair trial, but inflicting all sorts of punishments upon him. Scholars differ about where to situate verse 28, should it be read with the verse that follows at the beginning of chapter 14, Man who is born of woman is few of days and full of trouble.

He comes out like a flower and withers. He flees like a shadow and continues not. However, it might also be read in parallel with verse 25, Will you frighten a driven leaf and pursue dry chaff? Faced with the cruel and heavy hand of the Lord, Job is asking God why he is concentrating such anger upon a mean and small and feeble creature.

A question to consider. Some scholars have heard an allusion to verse 16 of this chapter, in Philippians chapter 1 verses 18 to 20. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice.

Yes, and I will rejoice. For I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be

honoured in my body, whether by life or by death. How might Paul be working with the background of the book of Job with this statement in its context? Hebrews chapter 4 verse 14 to chapter 5 verse 10.

Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God. Let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness.

Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifices for his own sins, just as he does for those of the people. And no one takes this honour for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was. So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, You are my son, today I have begotten you.

As he says also in another place, You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. In the days of his flesh Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.

And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek. Hebrews introduced the theme of Christ as the great high priest back at the end of chapter 2. 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. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house. Now after an exhortatory interlude, the author of Hebrews returns to the theme. One of the things that he will be demonstrating is that Christ both enters fully into our weaknesses and can graciously act on behalf of us in his strength.

Both dimensions of this will be very important to his argument. The final three verses of chapter 4 are the transition into the chapters that follow, concerning the priesthood of Christ. Jesus, the Son of God, has passed through the heavens and sat down at God's right hand.

He has gone in advance of us as our great high priest, completing his sacrifice and entering into rest. However, despite his character as the great champion that goes before us, he has entered into the same struggle with temptation that we face. The temptation here isn't so much with sin as such, as it is with the temptation to draw back from our calling, to fail to persevere through suffering to the end, the temptation of not firmly holding on to God's promise and entering into rest.

Despite being tempted to divert from the pain of the cross, Jesus endured the pain and the shame and has entered into the glorious rest of God as the high priest and the leader of his people. This is an assurance to us that we will enter too. We must faithfully follow Jesus and look to him.

Through him we also can draw near to God's very throne, which is a throne of grace for us, a place where we will find aid when we need it, and from where we will discover the strength that we need to persevere and to receive the promise of rest that God holds out to us. There will be many times of need, times when we feel the weakness of our flesh, the empty seductions of Satan, the bitter assaults of others and the darkness of a veiled heavens. Christ has been there before us.

When we come to him, we come to the one who has gone before us and blazed a trail for us. We come to the one who fully entered into our struggle, so that we might fully enter into his life. His throne is the throne of grace, not the throne of one who is seeking to trip us up, but one who desires, as our great High Priest, to bring us to God.

The opening verses of Hebrews 5 give a sort of job description of the High Priest. The author of Hebrews will seek to demonstrate that, not only does Christ fulfil the requirements for High Priest, he fulfils the duty of a High Priest more perfectly than any other could. The argument of verses 1-10 of Hebrews 5 takes a rough there and back again or book-ended character, what scholars can often call a chiasm.

It begins with the function of the High Priest in verse 1, moves to the person of the High Priest in verses 2-3, proceeds to the appointment of the High Priest in verse 4. Then it moves back through these aspects of the High Priest, like drawing the boxes that a High Priest needs to tick, before going back through the list, placing a big tick in every one of the boxes. However, while doing this, he shows that not only does Jesus clearly fulfil each of the criteria, he goes far, far beyond. He begins with his appointment in verses 5-6, then moves to his person in verses 7-8, before concluding with Christ's fulfilment of the function of his High Priesthood in verses 9-10.

The High Priest is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, offering both gifts and sacrifices for sins. They are representatives, acting on behalf of a people to whom they belong. They are also mediators, acting on behalf of that people towards God, going between the people and God.

However, while these official functions of the High Priest's role are important and primary to the definition of what he is about, his person matters too. The High Priest is not only a representative and a mediator, he is also a shepherd of the people. He needs to pastor those under his oversight, exhorting and encouraging them in faithfulness.

As a fallen human being, like those to whom he is ministering, the High Priest should be all too aware of the struggles those in his flock are experiencing. Consequently, he is gentle in dealing with the weak, the wayward and those lacking in wisdom. However, given his own sinful nature, he must sacrifice both for his own sin and also for the sins of those to whom he is ministering.

His greater suitability as a pastor comes at the expense of his capacity to act vicariously for them. He always has to deal with his own sins first. The High Priest doesn't appoint himself, nor for that matter is he appointed directly by the people he is serving.

He is a minister of God. Aaron, who was directly chosen by God, is a clear example of this. Christ meets the criterion of divine appointment.

To prove this, the author of Hebrews quotes Psalm 2 verse 7 and Psalm 110 verse 4. Like a number of the other ways that he uses the Old Testament scriptures, these might seem rather strained as proofs at first glance. However, this is almost certainly because he expects his hearers to be familiar enough with, and as imaginatively steeped in, the story of Christ and the scriptures to be able to join the dots. We should be able to reconstruct the reasoning that led him to connect these things.

The first quotation from Psalm 2 verse 7 speaks of the anointing of the Davidic Messiah as king. However, anyone familiar with the story of Christ should know that this verse corresponded with an event in Christ's life. In Luke chapter 3 verses 21 to 23, the baptism of Christ is described.

Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove, and a voice came from heaven, You are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased. Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about 30 years of age. Throughout Luke's Gospel, the temple and priesthood are prominent.

From the first announcement of the birth of John the Baptist, to Jesus' presentation in the temple, to the boy Jesus in the temple, through to the end of the book, when they are continually in the temple praising God, priestly themes pervade the book. There is a need for the purification of the Lord's house, and John the Baptist, the son of a priest, announces the coming one who will accomplish this. In the Old Testament, entrance into priesthood involved the baptism, as we see in Exodus chapter 40.

Levites, and we should probably assume priests also, began their ministry at the age of

30. Christ's sonship had already been connected with his presence in the house of his Father. Beyond this, a number of scholars have noted the presence of several names in Luke's genealogy with suggestive associations with priesthood.

Jesus will later implicitly appeal to John's baptism as the basis of the authority by which he cleansed the temple. John's baptism is framed then as a baptism into, and an anointment for, a sort of priesthood. A priesthood that perhaps might also remind us of the prophetic priesthood of Ezekiel, whose ministry also begins with an appointment in the 30th year by a river with opened heavens and a vision from God.

Ezekiel is also frequently called Son of Man. At the heart of Jesus' baptism, however, are the words of the Father. These are the words with which Jesus' public ministry begins.

The words of the Father's approval, and as the early readers of Scripture recognised, the words of his appointing to office. The words allude back to the words of Psalm 2, verse 7. The author of Hebrews is not randomly reaching for a text here, but is alluding to the event of Christ's baptism, an event with a manifestly priestly character, as the fulfilment of the messianic appointments spoken of in Psalm 2. And the second text is similar. It comes in another psalm, which is more famous for its first verse, the verse that is the Old Testament verse which is the most quoted in the New, Psalm 110, verse 1, which he himself had quoted in chapter 1, verse 13.

That verse connects not with the beginning of Christ's priestly ministry, but with the elevation of Christ into the heavenly temple in his ascension, having completed his once-for-all sacrifice. To the mind of the reader that is familiar with Scripture and the story of Jesus, it should be clear that the author of Hebrews has selected two texts that between them sandwich the full reality of Christ's priestly ministry in divine statements of appointment. Going back through his list, the next box that needs to be ticked is that of personhood.

Is Christ suitable, not just as one properly appointed, but also as an effective pastor of the flock, compassionate and gentle? We are to be left in no doubt. He has experienced the same struggles as we have. His anguish in wrestling with God in the tribulation of Gethsemane and on the cross at Calvary set the pattern for the tribulations that come upon his people.

Yet while the typical high priests were sinful in their flesh, and so their compassionate acquaintance with the struggles of their flocks came at the cost of effectiveness as vicarious servants on their behalf, Christ is faithful in his suffering. Christ is the Son himself, one with all of the prerogatives and authority that come with that. Yet he also enters fully into the reality of suffering and is formed in his humanity by the full trials of suffering that we experience.

How much more effectively can he represent us, acquainted with the weakness and the



struggle of faithfulness in the flesh, but uncompromised by sin and enjoying all of the privileges of the Son, so that while acting with gentleness and compassion he can act with power on our behalf? The function of the high priest was to act on behalf of men in relation to God to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. They were limited in their performance of this function by their human sin and frailty. But Christ is the source of salvation.

His salvation is eternal, not something that requires the continual repetition of sacrifices. His priesthood is also unending, as he is a priest forever according to the Order of Melchizedek. Christ not only ticks the box of the high priestly function, the last box of the list, he completely eclipses anything that any other high priest could perform.

A question to consider. In relation to Christ's priesthood, this passage alludes to Christ's baptism, his sufferings in the garden and on the cross, and his ascent into heaven. Where else in Jesus' earthly ministry can we see him as the great high priest?