

The Gospel According to Job

The Hush of Heaven – Part VI

Job 9-10

Introduction

A news article, posted from Athens, Greece, told the story of a Romanian prisoner who is currently serving time in jail, but is suing God. The Greek state television picked up the story of the inmate named Pavel M. He is serving twenty years in the west Romanian city of Timisoara. He apparently is blaming God for the troubles in his life and wants God brought to account for failing to fulfill His end of the bargain. He is claiming that his offerings to God were really nothing more than bribes and that God should be held responsible. Greek authorities also revealed that Pavel, the plaintiff, was claiming that when he was baptized in childhood, he concluded a contract with God. This contract, according to Pavel, had legal effects and God was obligated to protect him from the devil, but did not follow through. In line with the law, the lawsuit was submitted to court. The civil court said it is unlikely the case will ever be heard in court since it is impossible to subpoena God.ⁱ

I came across a Canadian organization that defends the rights of people against size discrimination throughout the world by means of advocacy and visible, lawful actions. Their mission is to provide legal protection for children and adults who face discrimination because they are overweight. This is well and good, but reading further into their mission statement, I found that they made a claim against God. Let me quote their claim, “The largest offender of size discrimination is God. He gives them heart disease and stroke, high blood pressure, diabetes, cancer, . . . gout and breathing problems . . . [We are] suing God . . . because God discriminates.”

Then they sarcastically ask, “Hey God, do you think defibrillators and insulin are free!?” There follows a place to sign up to, “. . . join [our] class action suit against God for the burden he is placing on the health care system . . .”ⁱⁱ

You might say, “Well, that’s Romania and that’s Canada.”

However, a secretary in Oakland, California, recently took God to court. A lightning bolt struck near her home, creating a fire and destroying her four houses. The 6-figure damage suit charges God with “careless and negligent” operation of the universe. The scathing indictment included the mismanagement of the weather. Her attorney said he would try to collect the money by attaching a claim to some property that had been deeded to a church nearby. She claimed that the money should come to her if God failed to show up in court.ⁱⁱⁱ

Fortunately for this woman, God probably will not show up.

If you want to know how Job is feeling at this point in the progression of this book, these people from Romania, Canada, and California would fairly well settle the issue – Job wants to take God to court.

Legal jargon begins to appear as Job begins to vent his frustration at what he believes to be the injustice of God.

- The word for contend, in Job 9:3, means to enter into litigation.
- The word for answer, in Job 9:15, is an actual reference to giving testimony in court.

- The word for judge, in Job 9:15, refers to an opponent at law.
- To set a time, as Job speaks in 9:19, literally refers to a subpoena to appear in court.
- The umpire or daysman that Job refers to in 9:33, is a reference to an arbitrator or judicial mediator.
- Later, in Job 13:3, Job refers to reason, which actually designates the argument of a legal case.
- In Job 13:18, Job refers to preparing his legal case.
- Job's pleading, in Job 13:19, is a reference to disputing in court.

Even still, Job laments in Job 9:14-16, basically, "Even if I could get God to appear in court, what would I be able to say that would make Him listen?"

Job reminds proud Bildad, the false counselor, that man is no match for God; that even when man thinks he is right, God does whatever He pleases – either punishing or pampering. And it does not seem to matter whether man is right or wrong.

Job is frustrated with the fact that God will not show up in court and allow Job an opportunity to state his case. He says to Bildad:

- God is invincible (Job 9:10);
- God is invisible (Job 9:11).

Notice Job's words in Job 9:11.

Were God to pass by me, I would not see Him; were He to move past me, I would not perceive Him.

In other words, "How do I make a case in court with someone I cannot see?"

God is invincible. God is invisible.

- God is unaccountable (Job 9:12).

Notice Job 9:12,

Were He to snatch away, who could restrain Him? Who could say to Him, "What are You doing?"

- God is unanswerable (Job 9:15a).

Note Job 9:15a.

For though I were right, I could not answer . . .

In other words, "I would not be able to state my case in court before this invincible, invisible, unaccountable God."

Furthermore, Job has almost reached the conclusion that,

- God is unmerciful (Job 9:22-24).

In Job 9:22-24, Job says, "This is my conclusion about the way God treats the human race,"

. . . He destroys the guiltless and the wicked.

If the scourge kills suddenly, He mocks the despair of the innocent.

The earth is given into the hand of the wicked; He covers the faces of its judges. If it is not He, then who is it?

Job's pain is being replaced with anger. Satan has not succeeded in getting Job to blaspheme God, but he has succeeded in distorting Job's perception of God. He is succeeding in making God the enemy of Job.

People in deep pain often arrive at this same conclusion. They think, "God must not love me . . . God must not care about me . . . God must be against me."

In chapter 10, Job becomes convinced of three things:

1. God is all knowing, but refuses to share His insight (Job 10:1-7);
2. God created Job, but no longer cares about him (Job 10:8-17);
3. God brought Job to life, but offers no hope (Job 10:18-22).

In spite of Job's despair and anger, his words are filled with rich truths. In fact, Job delivers the salient points of the gospel, in prophetic form, without realizing it.

For those of us who live with completed revelation, we can look at the anguish of Job and hear his demands for justice and read in his complaint the future promises of the gospel of Christ.

When Jesus Christ walked on that Emmaus road with the two disillusioned disciples, He worked His way through the Old Testament, beginning with Moses and the prophets, delivering the truth of the gospel.

Having studied chapters 9 and 10 in Job, I am fairly certain that Job's own words would have formed a few texts for our Lord to expound upon. Job raises questions that find answers in Christ. He makes statements that find fulfillment in Christ.

This is the "Gospel According to Job".

The Gospel According to Job

It is easy to see the dilemma of the entire human race, bound up in Job's opening response to Bildad in Job 9:2b.

... how can a man be in the right before God?

Some would say that Job is not referring to salvation, but vindication. It does not matter to me, for in either case, the question remains, "What would ever give a human being the right to be accepted by a holy, righteous God?"

This is the question of all of human history. This is the most important question you will ever have to answer – what is it that you think gives you the right to enter the presence of God and be accepted?

Your world today is telling you that just about anything you want to believe in will get you home.

This is as foolish as going to Raleigh Durham International Airport and saying, "I'd like to get a ticket to visit my cousins in Georgia . . . any plane will do, as long as the pilot is sincere and as long as I feel good when I get in my seat and deeply sense that this is the plane for me."

I do not get to Georgia that way.

I want an exact flight . . . exact number . . . exact gate . . . I even want the time of departure and arrival. I do not even need to meet the pilot or feel good about my seat – I rarely do.^{iv}

Why is it that when it comes to traveling from earth to eternity, any plane will do; any path will do; any gateway will suffice, as long as I feel good that this is the religion for me?

1. The gospel informs mankind how to be right with God.

- The gospel does not apologize for its claim to be through Christ alone,

... the way, and the truth, and the life... (John 14:6)

- The gospel says,

Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1)

- Peter preached,

... there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)

- Paul wrote to the Galatian church,

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,

who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us . . .

(Galatians 1:3-4a)

- Jude put an exclamation point on his answer to Job's question, which has haunted the heart of humanity, "How do I stand before God?" He writes,

Now to Him who is able to . . . make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy,

to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

(Jude 1:24-25)

This is the gospel. And this gospel answers the question of Job – we are both justified and vindicated in the presence of a holy God by the advocacy and atonement of God the Son.

The gospel informs mankind how to be right with God. Let us look at another principle of the gospel founding the anguish of Job.

2. The gospel silences the self-defense mechanisms of mankind.

Job says in Job 9:3,

If one wished to dispute with Him, he could not answer Him once in a thousand times.

In other words, if you did get your day in court, what exactly do you really think you would be able to say that would convince God that He is wrong and you are right?

The gospel silences the sinner. At the moment of his conversion, he is utterly empty of self-help, self-defense, self-support, self-vindication, self-promotion, and self-justification.

Paul writes that the whole world has been silenced as it stands accountable before God (Romans 3:19). Note his words,

... every mouth [will] be closed and all the world [will] become accountable to God;

The very thing the world resists; the very thing the world hates to consider will one day happen, and that is, all of the world will become, before God, accountable.

Abbott-Smith defines “accountable” as, “someone who is brought to trial”.

Paul is saying that all of the world will be brought to trial before God and is, even now, under the judgment of God; guilty before God.

Notice, in this future scene, that Paul does not say everyone will have their chance to articulate a defense? No! Romans 3:19 tells us that,

... every mouth [will] be closed . . .

“Even if we exhaust our legal options,” one author commented, “we can write letters, we can even write a book . . . we can argue . . . we can refuse to be silenced!”^v

This, however, is not the case in the courtroom scene that Paul is describing. He is referring to the coming judgment of all of humanity that are without Jesus Christ as their defense, when they stand before God at the great white throne.

Before this great white throne, described by John in Revelation chapter 20, there will be no defense; no series of alibis; no excuses; no plea bargaining; no prayer for judgment – just silence!

This is not a trial by peers; this is a trial by Providence. There are no extenuating circumstances for sin, God was an eyewitness to everything ever done, thought, or said.

The gospel declares that the host of unbelievers will stand before Him in silence. It is too late to pray. Paul declares that mankind without Christ is without an advocate; without a defender; condemned to everlasting torment.

Job asks, “Suppose mankind could get an audience with God, we would have no answer or excuse. Even if we had a thousand chances to speak, we would come up short.”

The gospel informs mankind how to be right with God.

The gospel silences the self-defense mechanism of mankind.

3. The gospel according to Job warns of the brevity of life.

Notice what Job says in Job 9:25-26,

Now my days are swifter than a runner; they flee away, . . .

They slip by like reed boats, like an eagle that swoops on its prey.

Job had watched the little boats made of papyrus and light bark skim across the water. These were the speed boats of the ancient world.

He had watched an eagle swoop down on its prey. Death came out of nowhere – and it came so fast.

I was at a stoplight some time ago, and a hawk suddenly flew past my windshield. It scooped up what looked like a mouse from the grass on the other side of the road and then flew off again.

That field mouse never saw it coming. That bird just swooped down and “wham,” life was over.

Job says, “That’s my life – that’s how fast it’s going – it’s flying away.”

This was the message of James to the scattered Jewish believers, “Listen, your life is like a vapor; a wisp of smoke; steam from a kettle – it’s here for a moment, but then it vanishes away.”^{vi}

This past month, we have read the news reports of the home-going of two Christian leaders and educators – Lee Roberson, the founder of Tennessee Temple University, and Jerry Falwell, the founder of Liberty University, who died this past week. Both men died days before the commencement exercises of the universities they founded.

I owe a debt of gratitude to both of these men. As a student at Liberty for one year before transferring to Tennessee Temple, I can remember sitting in chapel hearing Dr. Roberson speak. In one message, he made this comment to those preparing for ministry, “When you finish your education, don’t pray for God to give you a pulpit, pray for God to give you a city.”

I promptly forgot about this comment, but ten years later, as I finished seminary in Texas and wondered where my wife and I would go to serve Christ and His church, this statement came back to my mind and eventually led us where we are today.

Dr. Roberson was found at his desk in his office – gone. I was on the campus of Tennessee Temple a couple of days after Dr. Roberson passed away – two weeks ago. This former pastor and educator was in his late 90s. His body had just shut down and his kidneys failed. The president of the university told me that Dr. Roberson’s son had said to him that they needed to plan his funeral. He had responded, “You know, I’m disappointed – I thought I’d have a few more years to preach.”

In his 90s, Dr. Roberson had preached nearly every week for seventy years. However, to him it was like being in a boat speeding across the water; it was like an eagle suddenly swooping down out of nowhere and carrying him away.

It is the same for all of us.

This is a part of the gospel. We do not have much time.

Where do you stand with God?

The gospel informs mankind how to be right with God.

The gospel silences the self-defense mechanism of mankind.

The gospel warns of the brevity of life.

4. The gospel declares the incarnation of God the Son.

Look at this wonderful text of agony, yet prophetic longing, beginning in Job 9:32.

For He [God] is not a man as I am that I may answer Him, that we may go to court together.

Job laments, “God is not a man like me. He can’t communicate with me. I can’t see Him to talk to Him and answer Him. I can’t take Him to court and state my case.”

God is distant, transcendent, removed, and evidently, not too concerned about humanity.

However, God, through Christ, became a man, just like us.

As Paul wrote (paraphrased),

He humbled Himself, taking the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. (Philippians 2:7)

For Boaz to redeem Ruth, the Jewish law of kinsman redeemer required three things:

- The redeemer had to be willing to redeem his bride.
- The redeemer had to have the money to pay the redemption price.
- The redeemer had to be related to the bride’s family.

In the same way:

- First, the redeemer had to be willing to redeem his bride: Jesus Christ came to seek and to save those who were lost – He was willing to redeem His bride.
- Secondly, the redeemer had to be able to pay the redemption price: Jesus Christ, being fully God, was able to pay with His life and death the eternal penalty of our sin against the character of an eternally just and holy God.

- Thirdly, the redeemer had to be related to the family of the bride: Jesus Christ was fully God, but fully man – by being born into the human race, He became a relative of humanity and thus, qualified to redeem His bride.

Oh the irony of Job’s longing for God to become a man so that they could commune together.

The gospel declares the incarnation of God the Son.

Let us look at the final principle of the gospel according to Job.

5. The gospel announces the advocacy of Jesus Christ.

In the next verses, Job 9:33-34, Job goes on to lament with incredible irony,

There is no umpire [mediator; daysman] between us, who may lay his hand upon us both.

[Someone to] remove His rod from me, [so that His terror would frighten me no more].

Job cries, “I need someone to be a mediator between God and me; someone to remove the rod of God’s judgment and save me from the terror of God’s holiness. Is there no daysman; no arbiter; no umpire to lay his hand upon us both?”

Job was referring to the custom of the ancient court which used a daysman to act as an arbitrator between two parties to negotiate a settlement. It was the custom of the daysman to put his hands on the heads of the two disputing parties to remind them that he was the one with the authority to settle the question.^{vii}

“Is there anyone who can come between me and God and speak for us both and negotiate some sort of settlement?”

With prophetic longing, Job asks the question that Paul answers as the gospel is completed in the coming of Jesus Christ.

. . . there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man, Christ Jesus,

who gave Himself as a ransom for all..

(I Timothy 2:5-6)

Is there someone who can speak for me?

Yes! It is Christ, our Kinsman Redeemer.

Is there someone who can remove the rod of God and the terror of His judgment?

Yes! It is Christ, our risen Savior.

Job's ultimate hope was not in some reason; it was in a relationship – it was in the settlement of reconciliation between himself and God.

We know fully what Job did not know. The mediator he longed for is not only alive, He is available and ready to step in on our behalf.^{viii}

This Mediator is capable of laying His hand on God the Father and on us.

- Being the Son of God, He is fully aware of the claims of deity;
- Being the Son of man, He fully empathizes with the needs of humanity.

He has bridged the gap; He is capable of providing an everlasting settlement.

Conclusion

This is the gospel according to Job:

1. The gospel informs us of how to be right with God.
2. The gospel silences our defenses and excuses.
3. The gospel warns us of the brevity of life.
4. The gospel declares the incarnation of God the Son.
5. The gospel announces the advocacy of Jesus Christ, our Savior and our Lord.

We do not take God to court – we can take God into our heart.

We do not sue God – we can settle with God through faith in Jesus Christ, who is the Mediator between God and man.

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ⁱ “Romanian Prisoner Sues God,” RIA Novosti – World (Oct. 18, 2005).

ⁱⁱ <http://www.angryandrew.com/lawsuit.html>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Steven Lawson, Holman Old Testament Commentary: Job (Holman Reference, 2004), p. 83.

^{iv} Charles Swindoll, Job: A Man of Heroic Endurance (W Publishing, 2004), p. 104.

^v R. Kent Hughes, Romans (Crossway Books, 1991), p. 324.

^{vi} Fritz Rienecker and Cleon Rogers, Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament (Regency, 1976), p. 738.

^{vii} Warren Wiersbe, Job: Be Patient (Victor Books, 1991), p. 44.

^{viii} Swindoll, p. 106.