

Study 3 - Job by Neville Clark -"The complaint of Job"

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Reading Job Ch 19

We have really got into the argument of Job I'd say by now. We've looked at the conversation, the two major conversations between Yahweh and Satan in Chs 1 and 2 and now we have looked at the arguments of the friends themselves. The arguments of the friends were in some ways different to each other, but in many ways, the same as each other, so they complemented each other very well in their false understanding of the situation that Job found himself in regarding the real reason for his suffering.

This evening, we are going to look at Job himself, so I am going to pretty well stay with this section here, but now look at it from Job's point of view, because, well, we made the point in our last study that it wasn't actually that difficult for Job to defeat the friends in argument because all he had to prove was that the righteous aren't always blessed and the wicked don't always suffer. As soon as he could prove that, he could disprove the argument of exact retribution and he could overturn the friends, and the question arises, well why does it take 20 something odd chapters for him to do that when it appears. Certainly once he starts to do it seriously, it only takes a chapter or two and he's pretty much demolished them completely.

Well, the answer is, of course, that it took Job that long to develop his own argument. The friends continual prodding and their continual persecution of him over this issue made Job himself start to think a little outside of himself and what you are going to find is that Job in fact develops a whole argument against God here. Once he's got his argument against God developed, once he is clear on his position, then he turns all his guns on his friends and knocks them out in a couple of chapters. Now, he could have done that in Ch 6, but he was far too preoccupied with Why was God doing this to him? And where was this all going to end, what was the purpose of it all between him and God, and the friends continual prodding kept him thinking about his own relationship with God and once that was clear, then he just wiped out the friends in an instant. It is remarkable to see this happen and in fact, quite dramatic by the time you get to the place where Job finally arrives. So the point is, that even though the friends made no real progress in their argument and they just went round and round in circles for 20-odd chapters, or their share of them, Job made substantial progress. There is a clear progression in Job's thought throughout all of these chapters. He does not go round and round in circles like they do.

Now we've just read Ch 19, and there is a remarkable thing about Ch 19, well there are a number of remarkable things, but I draw your attention to something here in Ch 19, in v 23. By the time you get to Ch 19, Job has got his relationship with God completely squared away, he knows what the next step has to be. And you've got an example of that in v 23 of Ch 19. He says here, "Oh that my words were now written, O that they were printed in a book, that they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock forever." The first point is, "Oh that my words were now written," he's got some answers you see? Things have now come together in Job's mind and he knows how he wants to confront God on the issue of his, what appears to be, his unjust suffering. And it is time to start putting ink on a page, that's what he says in v 23, and then he goes to v 24 and he says, 'No, no, even better than that, I want my words chiseled into rock and the cavity of the rock filled with lead,' that's what he means in v 24, 'that they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock forever,' so chisel out the words with an iron pen, in fill the cavity with lead, so that the words will never ever perish. If you write them in a book, or a scroll, as it is in v 23, the words might be lost,

his complaint might be lost. 'I want it immortalised' is what he is saying, 'my complaint against God for what is happening to me.' Never let anyone ever forget the words of Job. Well, of course, these words have been memorialised, it didn't take a rock to do it, it is immortalised in Scripture, of course. But you know what? I think by the end of Ch 42, if Job could have deleted anything he said, these two lines here would have been the first couple to go. By the end of Ch 42, Job will be wishing he had never said what he said here in Ch 19, but the fact remains that there is a lesson here, there is an enormous lesson here, and this is one of the great lessons of the book of Job.

Now we are going to begin in a moment in Ch 6 which is where Job begins his argument, which is his first reply to Eliphaz' first speech. But before we get there, I am going to show you a few more details about the character of Job. The reason for that is because what Job is going to say here might surprise you, and in many ways it might alarm you that anybody could say what he says. For example if you or I were to say what Job gets to say here, every ecclesia in the world would call it blasphemy, there's just no question.

But this is Job we are talking about, and you've got to understand just how Job is different to us in this. Come with me to Ch 27, these are the monologues of Ch 27 to 31 and they are the chapters where Job speaks by himself to God, they are like soliloquies, great speeches Job gives, almost like rhetorical speeches spoken in an audience of men, but spoken to heaven, as it were, not asking for a reply, not even expecting a reply, just laments, or comments that he makes. And in Ch 26, Job has answered Bildad, so the argument with the three friends is finished by Ch 26.

In Ch 27, his monologues begin, and he continues speaking, this is the point, he continues speaking even after he has defeated the friends argument and he gives two speeches and you will see here, in v 1 of Ch 27, "Moreover, Job continued his parable and said," and then in Ch 29, "Moreover Job continued his parable and said," you see? In Chs 27 and 28 are the first monologue and Chs 29 to 31 are the second monologue of Job, these two protests, these pleas, these cries of injustice that Job makes after the conclusion of the debate.

And it is interesting you know, to notice the..I'll put up...this is the summary of these monologues, so here's Chs 27 and 28, the first monologue, here's Chs 29 to 31 the second monologue and you can see the content of the information that Job runs through in these two monologues. In the first one, he summarises the debate, he denies his wickedness, he says in fact that the friends are more wicked than him and then he talks about the fate of the wicked so the friends can see themselves in that picture, so he replies tit for tat somewhat in Ch 27. And then he says, 'but you know what? All these things are happening to me and I don't know why, and if God doesn't answer my prayer in a very obvious manner, how can any of us really find out why these things happen to us? So where can man find wisdom, how can man possibly find wisdom?' It is difficult to understand what God is doing, this is his point.

And the second monologue in Ch 29 he reflects on how things were in the past. What things were like for him in the past. Ch 30, what things are like now. Ch 31, his character, this is like a curriculum vitae, like a resume of Job's character, in Job 31, which, I might say, Oh, I don't know, how many of us could put... this is unbeatable....the unbelievable character of this man.

Well, the first observation you might make about this is to look at how the focus changes. Ch 27, he focuses somewhat on his accusers, on the three friends. Ch 28, where is the focus? On God. Chs 29 and 31, where's the focus? On himself, so you see, in fact Job gets a little more introspective, almost as he became more and more internal looking as the speaking continues. So an interesting observation, just in these monologues.

But look at Ch 29 and consider Job's relationship with God before all of these calamities came upon him. Here is the summary in Ch 29 of Job's relationship with God before the trial, v 1 he continues his parable and says, "Oh that I were as in months past and in the days when God preserved me, when his candle shined upon my head and when by his light I walked in darkness." So 'God was the light of my life' he says, 'every step I took was on the basis of the Word.' There is no ambiguity there, this is an extremely faithful and committed brother describing his relationship with the God he loves.

V 4, "As I was in the days of my youth when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle." Here is the NIV "Oh for the days when I was in my prime when God's intimate friendship blessed my house. I mean look at that relationship. He has got an intimate friendship with God, he says, v 5 when the almighty was with me, when my children were about me, he says, so there's the measure of the model family in the Truth, you see, there's nothing wrong there. You come across the page to v 18, I mean, Ch 29 goes on and on in this vein, v 18 of Ch 29, "Then I said," Job says, "I shall die in my nest, I shall multiply my days as the sand, my root was spread out by the waters, dew lay all night upon my branch, my glory was fresh in me and my bough was renewed in my hand." This is the security that Job had in his own future, like a great tree, an enormous canopy over it, roots reaching out this way and that way. What he is saying is, he expected a long life, grand-children and maybe great-grandchildren, the family would never wither, he says in v 19, his honour and strength would never fade, v 20, but when you come to Ch 30, everything has changed.

Look, v 1, "But now, those that are younger than I deride me, v 9 and now, I am their song. V 16, and now, my soul is poured out upon me." You see, everything has changed, and worst of all v 20, Ch 30:20, "I cry unto thee God, thou dost not hear me, I stand up, and thou regardless me not. Thou hast become cruel to me with thy strong hand thou opposeth thyself against me," the intimate friendship that we used to have is gone, it has been ruptured, NIV again here, "I cry out to you O God but you do not answer, I stand up but you merely look at me, you turn on me ruthlessly with the might of your hand you attack me," this is an upset man, brothers and sisters. "Yet look at what I am like," he says, Ch 31:1, "I made a covenant with my eyes, why then should I think upon a maid?" Moral purity, like, impeccable moral purity. V 5, "If I have walked with vanity, or if my foot has hastened to deceit, let me be weighed in an even balance," ruthless honesty all his life. V9, "If my heart has been deceived by a woman, if I have laid wait by my neighbours door," unmixed fidelity. V 13, "If I did despise the cause of my man-servant, or of my maid-servant when they contended with me," impeccable justice. V 16, "If I withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of he widow to fail," unflinching compassion. And you can read the list, you see, here it is here, there is no idolatry whatsoever in his life, no revenge, complete integrity in everything Job has done. I mean, he just hasn't done things wrong, like we might do them wrong. He just hasn't done the kind of sins we've done. Not that he hasn't sinned, but he is prepared to go into print before God on what his life is like. It is not as if Job is wrestling with these problems, he just doesn't do these sins, he just doesn't think like most of mankind thinks. It's not just that he tries to avoid wickedness, he has just never done these things. This is not legalism, brothers and sisters, this is a clean conscience before God, this is an immaculate conscience, and this is the outrage that Job feels now because of the suffering he is undergoing.

This is what he was like, this just is what this brother is like. Probably the greatest man, as I say, living in the world at this time. This is Job, this is the servant of God, and you've got to bear that in mind, when you come back to Ch 6. So never forget the calibre of this man as we start to now read what under some duress and anxiety he now starts to say....

All right, now Eliphaz has opened the debate in Chs 4 and 5 and Job is now going to have his opening words in Ch 6. Eliphaz has said that Job has got something to answer for, there are secret sins that he is not confessing. Well Job is very hurt by that, and in Ch 6:14 he comes back, "To him," to Eliphaz, he says, "To him that is afflicted, pity should be showed from his friend but he forsaketh the fear of the almighty." 'What kind of friend are you Eliphaz,' he says, 'anyone who doesn't show pity in a situation like this forsakes the fear of God, if you carry on like that you might have something to answer for yourself, if you

think I've got something to answer.' 'Carry on like this, the tables might turn, Eliphaz.' So Job immediately goes off on the front foot and he is angry at being treated like this by his friends.

But, you see, he's begun to think about the problem. He is hurt by his friend, he's hurt by God, and as he often does in the debate, he answers the friends, and then he just prays to God, in the middle of the chapter. Like Ch 7, in the middle of the chapter he just prays to God and then returns to answering his friends. So you read these words in Ch 7:17, Job says, publicly to God, Ch 7:17, "What is man that thou shouldn't magnify him and that thou should set thy heart upon him," you see, here is the RSV, "What is man that thou dost make so much of him, that thou dost set thy mind upon him and doth visit him every morning and test him every moment?" You see, he is frustrated that this agony that he is going through just has no let up and he doesn't know why, and how long it is going to go, all he knows is that any time soon he is going to die.

V 20, "I have sinned, what shall I do unto thee O thou preserver of men, why hast thou set me as a mark against thee who am a burden to myself," he says, now this is a bit of a poor translation in v 20. Listen to this from the RSV. "If I sin, what do I do to thee, thou watcher of men?" Or as Moffat says, "Oh thou spyer upon mankind." You know these are pretty strong words between a brother and his God, you know. "If I have sinned," v 21, he says, "why don't you just forgive me? Why don't you just forgive me if I have sinned, why do I have to keep suffering like this, because the way we are going" he says to God in v 21, 'You will kill me, you'll just kill me, and if I die, then when you look for me again, I won't be there, is that what you want God? Is that what you want, just to kill me? What about our intimate friendship?' You see how upset he is. He doesn't know what he has done to deserve this suffering and he simply warns God that God could be making a big mistake that he might regret later. You might think that you would never ever say this, but this is where Job's up to though, you see. Brethren and Sisters, these are the agonised words of a desperate man, it is easy for us to be critical. He's lost his wealth, he's lost his children, he has lost his servants, he's lost his health, he's sitting out there beside a fire, scratching himself, ostracised from his community, completely disfigured by disease that is going to take his life any minute, he's a shadow of the man he once was. And it appears from v 3 of this chapter, that it has only been a matter of months, a short time since all of this ordeal began, he has hardly had time to come to terms with things himself and you can see Job wrestling with the situation and nothing seems to make sense to him

Well Bildad replies in Ch 8 this rat-a-tat of this high powered lawyer comes in against him, and no emotion, no compassion, no understanding, just blasts out this incomparable justice of God, and Job should be able to understand that, if your children are dead, Job, it is because they've sinned, get over it, "Oh," says Job, Ch 9:2, "I know, it is so of a truth, but how should man be just with God." 'I know that nobody can claim to be pure alongside God, Bildad, I understand that, but when you talk about justice, when you are talking about the justice of God, Bildad, I'm not so sure about that. Look at v 17, because God breaketh me with a tempest, and multiplier my wounds without cause. There just doesn't seem to be any reason for what's happening to me, and of course, you know, this is the whole problem isn't it? These friends all assume that Job is suffering as a punishment for some sin that he has done. And what was the reason for Job's suffering? It was the result of a conversation that God had with Satan back in the first couple of chapters. And do you remember how that discussion went between God and Satan, that after Satan had destroyed Job's wealth, and his servants and his children, that Satan appears before Yahweh again in Ch 2:3, do you remember what God said to Satan? He said to him, 'Ah, hast thou considered my servant Job, none like him in all the earth, upright and so forth, and Job still holds fast his integrity though thou movest me against him without cause. That's exactly what Job says here you see, in v 17, "all this is happening to me without cause." Well that was true, viewed from Job's point of view, that was true. God was not punishing Job, but viewed as a punishment for sin, Job was right, the suffering was without cause, except that Satan had asked for it, that was the only cause for which Job was suffering.

Well, Job is looking for a cause, he is looking for a reason behind the suffering he is enduring. He doesn't know about the conversation with Satan, so he draws the obvious conclusion. Over the page, Ch 9:22, "It is not fair, it is not fair." V 22, "This is one thing, therefore I said it, God destroys the perfect with the wicked"

he says. 'It is not fair, God is not just, Bildad, you talk about the justice of God, well I have a big problem understanding that, God destroys the righteous with the wicked, show me your definition of justice.' And Job goes even further, v 24, In fact he says, "the earth is given into the hand of the wicked, God covers the faces of the judges thereof, if not where and who is he?" Job blames God for all of the injustices in the earth. 'God doesn't stop bad things happening to good people, he doesn't stop corruption, so not only doesn't he punish the righteous when he should be punishing the wicked, he allows wickedness to prosper, so lets talk about the justice of God, Bildad.' You can see, you can imagine this as being a pretty animated discussion when you start putting together what these people are saying to each other and the context in which they are saying it, very heated, very emotional, very animated.

But Job is determined, you see, he is very convinced, about his own righteousness. He is so convinced he would be vindicated before God, but he knows that God is too powerful to argue with. He knows he could never stand before God and talk to God like he is talking to Bildad. Look at v 32, Ch 9:32. "God is not a man as I am that I should answer him, and that we should come together in judgment." You see the problem is that God is not a man, 'I can't argue with God as if he were a man, he would just overwhelm me, I already know that,' says Job. 'You see I've got a problem here,' v 33, "neither is there any daysman between us that might lay his hand upon us both." 'What we need is a daysman or an arbiter, an umpire, someone who can mediate between us, but no such person exists, so what can I do? What can I do, I've got a complaint, I can never take it to God. I need somebody in between us because I clearly can't confront God face to face he'd simply destroy me.' And look how confident he is, v 34, "Let him take his rod away from me, and let not his fear terrify me." 'But, Ah, if God didn't destroy me, if God didn't just overwhelm me in an instant, well then I would speak and not fear him. Ah but it is impossible, it is not so with man. It can't happen,' he says.

Ah, but you see what he is beginning to say? He's got two requests here in v 34, the first request is 'Let God take away his rod from me,' stop punishing me.' Hey, he can hardly think straight with the pain he's in, so let God stop punishing me for a moment, and secondly, 'don't terrify me, don't overwhelm me.' If God would do that, then I could present my case.

Now a new idea emerges. Now you can imagine what the friends think of this, they are getting furious with this. A new idea emerges, Ch 10:8, "Thy hands," he says to God, "thy hands have made me and fashioned me together round about, yet thou dost destroy me." 'So you've created me, God, he says, but you are going to kill me.' "All right, remember I beseech thee that thou hast made me as the clay, wilt thou bring me into dust again?" 'Have you created me just to destroy me?' He says to God, 'Is this all there is to life? Perhaps you don't care that I try to live a righteous life, perhaps you don't care at all?' But he reconsiders.

So in comes Zophar as you have seen in Ch 11. Job reconsidered, Ch 13:16. Zophar spits out this first piece of invective in Chs 11, then that washes over Job and back he comes in Ch 13:15, "Well, he says, though God slay me, yet will I trust in him, and I will maintain my own ways before him," he says. 'All right,' he says, well lets says God does kill me?' Well even if he does kill me, I will still trust in him.' You see, there is an idea beginning to form here, God must be true to his own righteousness. 'If I know anything about the character of God,' says Job, 'he has got justice, he has got integrity, and if it appears to me in this point of time, that there is no justice with God, that things aren't adding up as they should, the day's going to come when it all pans out, and something must be done. God can't carry on like that, it would violate his own character to be unjust.' So he starts to think about this from God's point of view, 'you see, even if I can't fathom all God's deeds,' Job says, 'God character won't change, somehow there must be a way for me to defend myself against God,' or as it says at the end of v 15, "but I will maintain my own ways before him." Your margin says, "I will prove, I will argue my own ways before Him. And I am confident of that" he says, look at v 15, "Behold now, I have ordered my course, I know that I shall be justified."

This is amazing, he is extremely confident. 'I know what I am going to say to God,' he says, 'when I take him to task about how I have been treated. But I need two things first, I still need these two things' v 20. "Only do not two things unto me, and then will I not hide myself from thee," V 21 "Withdraw thy hand far from me," Number 2, "let not thy dread make me afraid." Number 1, 'stop punishing me.' Number 2, 'don't overwhelm me. If we can address that, if God just doesn't destroy me on the spot, in v 22 "then call thou and I will answer, or let me speak and answer thou me." 'You speak first, and I will answer you God, or I will speak first and you answer me, whichever you like, but don't destroy me. I'm going to have this conversation. Ah, but I understand if you are too angry to talk to me now. I understand if I have done something o upset you, Ch 14:13,

Look what he says, Ch 14:13, "Oh that thou wouldst hide me in the grave, that thou wouldst keep me secret until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldst appoint me a set time and remember me," 'bury me, he says, just kill me and raise me up at a time in the future when it suits you better. V 15, "Then thou shalt call and I will answer thee, thou wilt have a desire to the work of thy hands." 'On a better day you might feel differently about me,' he says to God. You can appreciate that the friends are giving him broadsides of this argument about the sins he must have committed, Job's really not paying them much attention. I mean he gives them the dignity of an answer and then carries on thinking this whole problem through himself, you see? The first point, he is not attempting to defend himself against the friends. He is laughing it off somewhat, I mean, lets not pretend it doesn't hurt him what they say, we may say, this is what happens to the wicked, their children die, they get robbed of everything, they break out in terrible skin diseases, obviously that would have hurt him but he's not trying to correct them at this point, he's trying to get this relationship with God sorted out first.

'And since his death is now a certainty,' he says, look at this, Ch 16:18, "Oh earth, cover not thou my blood, let my cry have no place." What does that mean? The NIV "Oh earth, do not cover my blood, may my cry never be laid to rest," he says, now that's interesting. What is this in relation to, what is this, this is a reference to Abel whose blood cried from the ground, you remember in Gen Ch 4. He thinks his blood is going to cry from the ground like Abel's so if God does kill him, until resurrection comes, his blood is going to cry for justice from the ground, that's what he says. Now Abel was killed unjustly, this is how Job sees himself, but who is it that is murdering Job? Well look at v 11, "God hath delivered me to the ungodly, turned me over to the hands of the wicked," he said," I was at ease, but he hath broken me asunder, he has also taken me by my neck and shaken me to pieces, and set me up for his mark," I mean, Job feels like God has got him by the neck and he is shaking him, and set him up as a target to fire arrows at. "The archers compass me round about, he cleaveth my reins asunder, he does no spare. He poured out my gall upon the ground." Look at the agony of the man. "He breaketh me with breach upon breach, he runners upon me like a giant," he says.

V 17, "And not for any injustice in mine hands. Also mine prayer is pure." 'What have I done to deserve this?' You see? What he is saying is, 'God is killing me and I am innocent, let my blood cry from the ground. My case could never be closed, you see, because to die in innocence as though I am judged guilty is against all equity, and it can't be allowed to remain that way.' You think about what Job's really saying though, think about the seriousness of his allegation. Who was it that killed Abel? Well, it was Cain. Who is it that is killing Job? It's God, so Job is paralleling God with Cain, he's saying that God's doing to me exactly what Cain did to Abel and my blood will cry no less from the ground because of that than Abel's did because of what Cain did to him. You see?

So he is pretty upset, he's pretty emotional about this whole thing, but you know, the interesting thing is this, you just look at how much greater God's understanding of all this is than man's. Look at v 17, Job says, "not for any injustice in my hands, even my prayer is pure," he says. Look at what your marginal reference says by that 'y' in v 17, Isaiah 53. You see, God is doing something with Job, that at this point, Job doesn't even understand. He is an unwilling Messiah, but it is no question, it is the just suffering for the unjust, there is no question, Job hasn't got there yet, he doesn't understand that yet you see, and God has

got a far, far bigger perspective on this whole issue than simply Job's suffering, or simply Job's understanding of his own suffering, you see?

Job didn't die, you know. Job thinks he's going to die here, but he doesn't actually die. But there was another man who did die, and God did kill him, and he did suffer like Job, but unless he had died, the Lord, I mean, Job's righteousness so called would perish with him. He would never ever see the light of day except for that man that died. Who are we to question the wisdom of God in our lives, brothers and sisters, you look at things that happen to you and you can't make them all add up, how do you really know what God's objective is. And you can see, we look at it from a great distance of thousands of years and we know how it all ends up and we can see Job in the midst of it. Job's sitting in the midst of it and he cannot see light at the end of the tunnel, and he's a faithful man, and he knows he's going back and forth across his own Bible of which he knows a considerable portion and he can't make any sense of this, but straight away in your margin, the translators are telling you there is a bigger point here. At this point, Job doesn't understand that, you see, does he? And it is the same with us, we just don't know enough about the purpose of God.

But of course, all this only brings us to the next problem. When Job is raised, who will be a witness to his innocence? I mean, look at v20, the friends are going to be no help, look, 'my friends, he says in v 20 of Ch 16, well, they scorn me, but my eye pours out tears unto God. You see, all my friends will be of no help. Well there is only one choice. I say that I am righteous, I say that I am pure, what corroborating evidence have I got? Well, the people that are around me, but now they spit at me. My own, even the three, don't trust me, my best friends, my family, where are they? Who will witness for me, who will vindicate me, who will help me defend myself against God. V 19, only one choice. Also now, behold, my witness is in heaven, my record is on high, God's going to have to be honest, God himself is going to have to be my witness.' The RSV here, "He that vouches for me is on high," so on the one hand, you see, God is his enemy who is killing him, and on the other hand, God is going to have to be his witness to save him. No matter how you look at it, it forces God to argue with God.

This is where Job's got to you see, and it is like Job is fleeing from God the destroyer into the arms of God the vindicator, and a remarkable thing about this is that despite his anguish he knows God will be true to his character and be honest in defending him, so that even if God does kill him, even if God does punish him unjustly, Job knows that God's character can't change, justice must prevail. And God therefore will have to defend him at the end, but he knows that justice may not come in his life-time. V 22, "When a few years are come then I shall go the way whence I shall not return," I'll die. And it is interesting though because we didn't read it, but you might like to know, in ch 10:20, Job says "Are not my days few?" So in Ch 10 it appears that he had days to live and Ch 16 it appears he's got years to live. Job's spirits are rising, you see, he is starting to get answers to the dilemma, he is starting to get more upbeat about this whole thing and on that basis we come now to Ch 19 which we read.

Now you look with me at v 25 of Ch 19. Now these are words that you know well, but how well you know them, brothers and sisters. Ch 19:25, "For I know that my redeemer live the and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." Look what he says, "My redeemer lives." In this context his redeemer is God, because that's the witness of Ch 16:19, that's who he thought his redeemer was, but look at what Job says, look what Job understands about the Truth. He believes God will be his redeemer because there is no mediator or friend to vouch for him. Secondly he believes he will be vindicated since he has suffered unjustly, and he is righteous, so he believes that God is going o accept the fact that he really was righteous and that he didn't deserve this punishment as he thinks it currently is. Thirdly, he believes that he won't be vindicated in this life, and so he waits for the future. Fourth, true justice requires bodily presence and since he is going to die and his body will be destroyed completely he expects to be resurrected. Fifth, he believes that judgment will be upon the earth, that's what it says in Ch 19:25. Sixth, he believes that he will see his redeemer literally. "I myself will see him with my own eyes" he says, "I and not another." "How my heart yearns within

me” says a modern translation. This is what Job understands, of the resurrection, of the judgment, of the interview before God, this is what he has put together. Quite remarkable, isn't it.

So this is an enormous climax now of Job's understanding. God began as his creator. Then God was his enemy. Then God was his judge. Then God was his witness in Ch 16, now in Ch 19, God is his redeemer, and Job wants a public declaration that he is righteous, that's what he wants, that these things should not have happened to him. Well there is one thing you have got to understand about these verses, as I say, verses 25 and 26 are well-known verses, of course, they appear in the oratorio "The Messiah." What does "The Messiah" quote these verses to prove? Well, it quotes it to speak about the resurrection, to prove that the resurrection is going to come, but you understand that is actually, well, to misquote the verses in a sense. Well, doctrinally the verses certainly speak of the resurrection, yes, so "The Messiah," I am suggesting, quotes the verses correctly in a doctrinal sense, but incorrectly in a contextual sense. What is the reason that Job says these verses? Not because he wants the resurrection, but because he wants justice, isn't it? He thinks that God is going to be forced to vindicate him, the only reason resurrection comes up in these verses is because he thinks he is going to die in this lifetime, that the disease is going to take him, Oh yes, it might take years, but at this point he can't see any other way that God is so upset with him that God will have to put him down and bring him back out on a better day. That is the only purpose for the resurrection. The whole issue of the redeemer here is that Job will be vindicated before God, and he will finally get his day in court and the justice he desires.

So the God who is clearly determined to crush him, as he believes, would also have to be true to himself, and must vindicate Job after his death if he truly was righteous, if Job truly was righteous, at which time he would begin to see God as a friend. So you see, that is really the point of these verses, not resurrection at all, resurrection is simply a means to an end.

But having got to this point, we've now reached a climax in Job's understanding. The friends are still slugging him. You see how far Job has moved on from the argument of the friends, they are still slugging him back and forth on this argument of exact retribution, the fate of the wicked, the justice of God, Job's left them way behind, and this is how the argument looks. This is how the argument looks, here is the entire argument of Job, the whole section from Ch 6 through to Ch 26. He defends the fact that he is grieving, 'even animals when they are suffering, they grieve, they cry out,' he talks about the failure and the ignorance of the friends, the false doctrine of the friends on this exact retribution question, but he hasn't committed these sins that they have suggested he must have committed. In fact, the wicked do prosper, so exact retribution is not true, God is all-powerful, man however can't stand before God, so man needs an umpire, who can explain God's treatment of man, so obviously he's going to die soon, but he still wants an audience with God. He establishes the basis for that audience, the two things that he needs for God to do to facilitate the audience, that obviously God intends to destroy him, so he hopes for the resurrection, his suffering, God will have to finally be the advocate that Job needs, a last cry for justice and then the resurrection, this is the argument that Job makes. And we've got right down here now to Ch 19. In fact, there it is there, there is a little more detail in there. These dots here are those verses, so I've told you that I have to get it up in sections so that you can see the exact verses I mean, we've just read the blue dots, we've just read all of those verses, that's the argument we've just gone through.

And now we are up to Ch 21, and now he is going to just completely destroy the friends in a couple of chapters. Not only sinners suffer, exact retribution isn't true, I mean he can demolish them in a very, very short time. You might say, Why didn't he demolish them back up in Ch 6? Well, because he's got to get this argument worked out. Then he comes back and he goes poof! And he destroys the argument of exact retribution, but accepts the fact that he might have to die, in a more or less short time. This is Job's argument, you see? And that's why it happens like this.

Well, of course, as I say, we've got to Ch 19, he's got to the pinnacle if you like of his argument and now he turns on the friends, and he's going to have to smash the friends. Here we go, Ch 21. It really doesn't take very long, Ch 21:1. This is after Zophar's second and final speech is over, "Job answered and said, Hear diligently my speech and let this be your consolation." 'Listen carefully to what I tell you,' he says. 'Suffer me that I may speak and after I have spoken, mock on. And if what I have to say now doesn't convince you, it doesn't really matter to me, I've got all the answers I need.'

Job is extremely confident in Ch 21. V 7 "Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power," 'I don't see the suffering in their lives. Their seed is established in their sight with them, their offspring before their eyes, their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them.' 'The wicked are in a pretty good position, nothing goes wrong for them. If you haven't seen this,' he says in v 29 of this chapter, if you haven't observed that, then go and ask one of the travelling men, go and ask somebody that's going to and fro in the earth, go and see somebody who has seen a bit of life, and they will tell you exactly how it is. It is not true that the wicked suffer all over the place for their wickedness, it's just not true. And if that's not true, then exact retribution isn't true either.'

I mean, he has just dealt with this in a couple of verses. Well, Ch 23, Job's confidence is increasing, he's answered his friends and now he wants to answer God. V1, Ch 23, "Job answered and said, even today is complaint bitter, my stoke is heavier than my groaning," he says. "Oh that I knew where I might find God, that I might come even to his seat." 'You know' he says, 'I would order my cause before him, I would fill my mouth with arguments. I would know the words that he would answer me and understand what he would say to me. Would he plead against me with his great power? No, he won't, he will put strength in me.' You see what he says there? He now wants to have the debate immediately, he has to accept that he is going to die at some point. He wants to have the debate with God before he dies. He wants to debate right now. 'Will God destroy me, will he? No he won't, he will uphold me.' Extremely confident is Job here in Ch 23. Back earlier he had hesitated about challenging God. He said that a meeting with God would terrify him, that it would overwhelm him, that God would destroy him. He said that he wanted two conditions, that's all gone now. Look at v 10, Ch 23:10, he doesn't need these two conditions any more, "but God knows the way that I take, when he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold," 'then test me he says. Come and find me and then test me,' he says, I will succeed, I will pass the test.

But the problem is of course, he doesn't know how to find God. He wants to have the debate, he wants to take God to task, but he can't find God. V 8, Ch 23:8. "Behold, I go forth, but he is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive him. 'On the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him. He hides himself on the right hand that I can not see him,' he says, 'I can't find God, I can't have the debate I want,' that's what he says. 'But, you know, it won't happen in this life anyway because obviously God intends to destroy me,' v 13. "But he is in one mind and who can turn him and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth." The implication is, 'he is going to kill me, he is determined. I can't stop him from killing me. All I know, therefore, v 17, is that darkness is coming. I want the debate now, but I can't take it to God, darkness is coming, I'm going to die.'

You put all that together, what has now happened in the three cycles of this debate because here we are we are in Ch 23, we are pretty much at the end of the debate. Job protested against the sins alleged by his friends, maintaining his innocence and complaining to God about God's unjust treatment of him. As the friends are unable to offer assistance, Job turns to God for help. He wants an audience but cannot appear for himself. He looks for a mediator but there is none. The situation's hopeless, he sinks to his lowest depths and longs for the resurrection. That is by the end of Ch 14. The second cycle, Ch 15 to 21, Job continues to hunt for answers. Since man is too weak to represent himself before God, God himself must represent man's case in order to achieve a fair judgment, in fact, his own character requires it. So even if Job dies now, God must resurrect him and vindicate him.

Having established this, Job now turns his attention to disproving his friends' arguments. The third cycle, Chs 22 to 26, though he's made progress Job now finds God incomprehensible, arbitrary, unjust, and a poor ruler of the world. He has won the debate, but is no closer to understanding the purpose of God with creation or the real reason for his suffering. So this is where Job has got to so far in this debate. So you can see the enormous progression in Job's understanding. The friends are going round and round in circles. They keep bludgeoning him with this exact retribution argument and Job just takes off and when he has finally got to a position where he thinks he can win his day in court, he demolishes the friends in a couple of chapters. That is why it takes so long and this argument appears to go round in circles, but it is not really going round in circles from Job's point of view you see. Very interesting.

Well, he has suffered a lot, he's lost his business, he's lost his money, he's lost his family, he's lost his health. He's been hurt by his friends, and it looks he is now being attacked by God. Satan said that Job would curse God in all that happened, that he would leave the Truth, that he was living a righteous life only for the money. In fact, the reverse was true. When Job was tried, he did lose everything, the one thing he would never relinquish he said is his own righteousness. God could take everything from him, his possessions, his wealth, his health, his family, everything, but God could not take away his character. He couldn't take his character. This was the greatest commodity Job owned, you see? And Satan was wrong. Not just wrong, but I'd better not speak without respect, but Job's going to say, 'even if God left the Truth, I wouldn't.' 'Even if God left the Truth, I wouldn't,' Job says. That sounds ridiculous, do you want me to prove that? You come with me to Ch 27, how else would you read this. Now I am saying, that is blasphemous for any one of us to say that, this is what Job says, Ch 27:2. This is at the same time the greatest strength and the greatest weakness of Job. Ch 27:2, "As God liveth, who has taken away my judgment, and the Almighty who hath vexed my soul, all the while my breath is in me and the spirit of God is in my nostrils, my lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit." V 2 "even if God is unrighteous" v 2, "I will not be" v 4. You see that, The NIV, v 2 "as surely as God lives who has denied me justice, the almighty who has made me taste the bitterness of soul, my lips will not speak wickedness." 'Even if God stoops to that, I never would. He can take everything, but he can't take my character,' he says. And he swears an oath on that, based on the injustice of God. Have you ever heard such a thing, this is Job, that is why I turned to those verses at the start of our address this evening. This is the servant of God, this is Job, this is a man par excellence, look what he said. This is how strongly he feels, you see, and the friends? V 5, 'God forbid that I should justify you,' he says. "Until I die I will not remove my integrity from me, my righteousness I hold fast, I will not let it go, my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live." 'I will never ever admit you are right till the day I die, you will ever ever convince me of sin, I just haven't done the things you accuse me of.'

The problem is, he's defeated his friends, that's fine, but now he has condemned God, because he can't admit the possibility of his own imperfection. The fact is, that Job doesn't know everything. He doesn't know the real reason for his suffering, but there is no way that God could possibly reveal the discussion of Ch 1 and 2, there is no way Job can be allowed to find that out, that would ruin everything. That would completely ruin the trial of Job's character, but because of that, Job assumes that there is some fault with God.

Well, he begins the monologues with an oath, Ch 26, and he ends them with a declaration of his innocence. You come to Ch 31. These are the last words of Job before Elihu starts to speak. Ch 31:35, look at this. "Oh," he says, "that one would hear me. Behold my desire is that the Almighty would answer me and that my adversary had written a book." What does that mean? What do you suppose Job is asking for here? Well, he wants to know what charges God is going to bring against him. He wants to know what he has done wrong, he wants to know the reason that God is punishing him, because he still believes that it is a punishment that he is undergoing. He wants to hear the indictment and he wants it written down. V 36. "Surely I would take that book upon my shoulder, I would bind it as a crown to me, I would declare unto God the number of my steps as a Prince would I go near unto him, if such a thing existed," he says. 'If such a book existed, I would wear it like a Prince wears a crown. I would wear that book as a badge of honour.' Why? Because it would be blank, that's why, it would be blank. This is the confidence of Job. Let's hear the charges, the book is empty. He is confident that it would contain no word of guilt about him whatsoever, he'd be glad to meet the charges whatever they are, because they are non-existent, that's his point, you see.

Now why do you suppose he is asking for that? Why do you suppose he is asking for the book God would write against him at judgment? Well, because he wants his day in court. Oh, yes, yes, but that's not all. You see, he's got his own book, he's got his own book. You read about it in Ch 19. He wants those words memorialised, he wants them carved into the rock and filled with lead, and if those words in Ch 9 were carved into the rock and filled with lead, what do you suppose that would like like, brothers and sisters? This is the court of heaven, Job versus God, the plaintiff has 5 charges. Number 1, God acts in an arbitrary and a destructive manner, people, particularly the righteous are destroyed for no reason. Number 2, God is indifferent to wickedness, the wicked prosper without punishment. Number 3, God is silent, the creation is subject to his will without understanding. Number 4, Job is a righteous man, but he has been treated as though he was unrighteous, God is unjust. Number 5, Job requires public vindication from God. God must admit that Job is righteous.

I think it is fair to say we have left the friends a long way behind, and even Satan, really isn't in the game any more, is he. This whole issue that arose is ancient history now. This is one of God's greatest servants ever, brothers and sisters, one of God's greatest servants ever, but you can see, we've got a problem, we've got a really big problem. This is going to take some time to solve. God is going to have to get involved himself. That is why I looked at the quality of the character of Job before all this began. This is unbelievable that a brother in the Truth could have allegations like this against God and expect to win them in court, but that is what we've got to and there's the proof. These are extremely serious allegations, and we've gone too far, and this is going to require as I think you can see, an answer from heaven itself.