

# Job 19: Biblical Reading and Reflections

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Date: 21 April 2021

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     Job chapter 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 forever. 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 to 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.

[ 3 : 56 ]     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 is 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 seem 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.

[ 5 : 13 ]     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.

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.

[10:10] A question to consider. How could Job be read as a type of Christ, and how does Job's hope anticipate Christ's redemption?