

Up to this point we have the following taking place: Job was minding his own business taking care of his family and the vast real estate that he possessed along with animals and care takers, and he did all of this with the understanding that he belonged to God and was exceedingly blessed by God.

He was a man of faith in the promises of God and even God Himself acknowledged this. And as we saw last week Job's understanding in the promises of God had at its core his redemption from the penalty of sin through the Redeemer promised to Adam and Eve.

He fully understood that it was because of Adam's rebellion before a holy God that caused God to judge Adam and all men from that time forward.

Job 31:33 ³³ "Have I covered my transgressions like Adam, By hiding my iniquity in my bosom,

And by bringing up the name of Adam it was assumed that all of the people who are now involved in his particular trial would have known who Adam was.

What does this suggest about the general understanding of Adam and his sin, at least in the area in which Job lived, which is the land of Uz in Edom?

Again, there's a tendency to think that people outside of the covenant people of Israel did not have this understanding of God's promised redeemer.

But we know that from the very start people who were not part of the covenant seed still knew the truth of who God was and what He had done in judging Adam for his sin and how that sin now rested on all mankind.

We know, for example, that Cain intimately knew the promises of God and what God desired of people from the time of his parents original rebellion.

How do we know this?

Because there was already a worship-of-God routine established in the family of Adam and Eve in which Cain participated and the

whole family knew was a memorial to the future promise of the Redeemer.

Genesis 4:3-5 ³ So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground. ⁴ Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering; ⁵ but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell.

What was Cain specifically doing according to verse 3?

He was bringing an offering to the Lord.

Why would Cain, and for that matter, Abel, be bringing an offering to the Lord?

To worship the Lord according to the way in which God desired to be worshipped.

Why would it be important that God be the One who determined what was proper worship?

Because God is the One who has created man and now post-fall was the One who determined how man would approach God since that approach to God has been dramatically changed from the original relationship He had with them in the Garden.

In God's grace He has established how man would be covered from His sin and that is seen early on with the way man was to approach God.

Does anyone remember how Adam and Eve were covered by God?

Through the shedding of blood by a guiltless victim.

Genesis 3:20-21 ²⁰ Now the man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all *the* living. ²¹ The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.

You'll notice here in this verse that the covering of their nakedness did not take place until after they acknowledged their faith in the promises of God. In other words, God gave them a new life in the promise and then as a covenant sign and seal He physically covered them from their nakedness, which we know today is a way of describing our shame before a holy God.

But the term nakedness as it relates to shame after the time of Adam and Eve is still directly tied to sin and the punishment by God for that sin.

Lamentations 4:21-22 ²¹ Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, Who dwells in the land of Uz; *But* the cup will come around to you as well, You will become drunk and make yourself naked. ²² *The punishment* of your iniquity has been completed, O daughter of Zion; He will exile you no longer. *But* He will punish your iniquity, O daughter of Edom; He will expose your sins!

In speaking to a lukewarm church called Laodicea in the book of Revelation Jesus makes the connection to the nakedness of our shame in sin by telling the people in that church to come to a real faith in Christ.

Revelation 3:14-22 ¹⁴ "To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this: ¹⁵ I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. ¹⁶ 'So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. ¹⁷ 'Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, ¹⁸ *I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.* ¹⁹ 'Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. ²⁰ 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. ²¹ 'He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. ²² 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'"

At first glance it may appear that Christ is speaking to believers who simply need to repent of their ways and come back to their Lord and Savior, but the language does not allow for that. Jesus is writing to a church that is a body of people who are identified with His name.

But it is clear from the language that this group of people who are identified with the name of Jesus Christ are also described as

lukewarm and this is in the context of not recognizing that they have a need for their Savior.

Verse 17 makes it clear that they are self-sufficient without God and have no need of anyone else which is why Jesus points out that they say they are rich, they say they have become wealthy, which is acknowledging that their wealth is gained by their own efforts.

But the wealth being described here is not a wealth that necessarily has anything to do with physical treasures, but a wealth of life that they have opted out of. And this is why Christ juxtaposes their supposed wealth with being wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked.

This is describing their spiritual condition, not their physical orientation to themselves or the world. And this is why Jesus continues to express to them that they must buy gold refined by fire from Christ.

By the way, if they are required to buy gold refined by fire from God what does this necessarily mean that they don't have?

Gold refined by fire from God.

That gold has nothing to do with physical wealth but spiritual life. This is not to suggest that they can purchase this in their own effort as they have already been told that they can purchase nothing that will please God in their own strength, because as Jesus told them, you are poor.

So, in what way can they purchase this gold refined by fire? But first what is this gold refined by fire?

The first thing we must establish is that whatever this gold is, its source is spiritual in that it is bought from God. We are told that this gold from God has been refined by fire, which is to say that it is a perfectly pure gold from the hand of God that only God can provide, as opposed to the gold of this world which is used to purchase other things.

It's interesting that God is saying, purchase gold.

In our world today, why do we normally suggest that people buy things like gold; in other words to what end do we buy gold as opposed to buying bread and milk?

To invest in our futures.

But how do the poor and miserable and the blind and the naked buy gold, especially gold refined by fire from the hand of God?

They buy it as God gives it to them. Not that they exchange some other commodity to obtain the gold like the Laodiceans attempted, but buy it in the sense that they come empty handed to receive grace and mercy.

This passage in Revelation has its counterpart in the book of Isaiah.

Isaiah 55:1-3 ^{NAU} "Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; And you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk Without money and without cost. ² "Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And delight yourself in abundance. ³ "Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, *According to* the faithful mercies shown to David.

Here the Lord is telling all who have no money to come, buy and eat. But notice the one's who are able to buy and eat. Who are they according to the beginning of verse 1?

Everyone who thirsts.

But we have a problem. Who thirsts for God?

Romans 3:10-18 ¹⁰ as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; ¹¹ THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; ¹² ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE." ¹³ "THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE, WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING," "THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS"; ¹⁴ "WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS"; ¹⁵ "THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD, ¹⁶ DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS, ¹⁷ AND THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN." ¹⁸ "THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES."

There is only one solution for anyone to have the ability to thirst for God and it is entirely a work of God alone.

John 6:35-37 ³⁵ Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst. ³⁶ "But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe. ³⁷ "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.

And this is the only way that these words of Jesus make any sense.

Matthew 5:6 ⁶ "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

John 4:13-14 ¹³ Jesus answered and said to her (Samaritan woman), "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."

Only God can give this water to whom He desires and to whom He enables to reach out an empty hand to buy the gold and have that person exchange that gold for an eternal future with the God who saves.

It is certainly possible that some of the people in the church of Laodicea were true believers and were swept up with those who for all practical purposes had abandoned their need for Christ. In this sense these true believers were being disciplined because Christ loved them and was calling them out of a lukewarm existence.

Only those in Laodicea who heeded the call to buy gold refined by fire would be found to be true followers of Christ, but it would only be those people who had eyes to see and ears to hear what the Spirit was saying to the church who would be able to respond.

My point in going down this path is to remind us that our nakedness and our shame because of sin is recognized only by those who have eyes and ears that are opened by the grace of God. Cain knew the promises of God and rejected them.

And now Job who is quite a few generations separated from that first family is still carrying on in the promises given to Adam and Eve because God had given him a thirst for the living waters found in Christ.

And now, as his friends judge him for things he has not done and he continues to respond in a way where he will not let go of his faith in those promises, everyone is at an impasse, including the

last person to speak to Job who is a fourth friend not originally mentioned.

His name is Elihu who is a relatively young man compared to the others and has chosen to speak last out of respect for his elders. And this young man has decided that everyone is out of line; the three friends of Job and Job himself and that he has the last word on what is right.

And he will speak from chapters 32 through 37. But in those chapters he will actually spend a good deal of time acknowledging the greatness of God as the One who is creator and sustainer of all things.

Job 37:14-24 ¹⁴ "Listen to this, O Job, Stand and consider the wonders of God. ¹⁵ "Do you know how God establishes them, And makes the lightning of His cloud to shine? ¹⁶ "Do you know about the layers of the thick clouds, The wonders of one perfect in knowledge, ¹⁷ You whose garments are hot, When the land is still because of the south wind? ¹⁸ "Can you, with Him, spread out the skies, Strong as a molten mirror? ¹⁹ "Teach us what we shall say to Him; We cannot arrange *our case* because of darkness. ²⁰ "Shall it be told Him that I would speak? Or should a man say that he would be swallowed up? ²¹ "Now men do not see the light which is bright in the skies; But the wind has passed and cleared them. ²² "Out of the north comes golden *splendor*; Around God is awesome majesty. ²³ "The Almighty-- we cannot find Him; He is exalted in power And He will not do violence to justice and abundant righteousness. ²⁴ "Therefore men fear Him; He does not regard any who are wise of heart."

And so, Elihu has set the stage for God to take over and begin to wrap up the conversation as to who is really in charge of the affairs of all men including the righteous man, Job.

Job 38:1-3 ^{NAU} Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said, ² "Who is this that darkens counsel By words without knowledge? ³ "Now gird up your loins like a man, And I will ask you, and you instruct Me!

What has been the main point of contention between Job and his friends as to the reason why Job was experiencing the trials he was facing?

They believed that Job had sinned against God in some way where he was deserving of such punishment or discipline.

And yet Job continued to hold out that he had done nothing wrong that would have deserved such treatment from God.

And yet, who was ultimately responsible for Job's trials?

Now keep in mind that the entire book of Job is essentially looking for answers from God as to why all of this was taking place in the life of Job.

And you'll note that for some seven chapters, prior to this chapter 38, is the last time that we heard from Job. Elihu is the last to speak.

And yet, who is the Lord answering in the first verse of chapter 38?

Sometimes we'll ask questions of the Lord about our lives and we may not get the answer in the time frame we expect. And in the mean time we might speculate about all sorts of things as to why things are happening the way they are.

Job hasn't asked a question of anyone in our text, including God, for quite some time. And for all intents and purposes Job may have actually given up ever getting an answer from God. But the Lord never forgot the questions Job had of Him. And now we're told that the Lord answers Job out of the whirlwind.

The word whirlwind can also be translated storm as the NIV puts it. Some might suggest that the storm or whirlwind being addressed is the whirlwind in Job's life as everything in his life is turned upside down.

But more likely it is descriptive of God's entering into this situation in a very dramatic way, not unlike how God entered into the presence of the nation of Israel as they were brought before Mount Sinai to hear from God.

Exodus 19:16-17 ¹⁶ So it came about on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound, so that all the people who *were* in the camp trembled. ¹⁷ And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain.

When God enters a room people listen. And when God announces Himself before Job this is not a dream or a vision, or some sort of hallucination of Job. God is speaking directly to Job and his friends. And it says that he answered Job out of the whirlwind.

Now, if you had a question of me and I answered you, then you would expect information from me that was tied to your question that in turn satisfied your question.

That's not what we have here. We're told that God answered Job, but the answer is not what Job expected. The answer begins with a question for Job. And this is not that uncommon in a teaching exercise. For example, if you asked me, why doesn't God choose to save everyone?

I might answer you like this. Is a holy and righteous and just God obligated to save anyone?

Did I answer your question?

What did I do?

I posed a question to your question that made you think about your question in an entirely different light to where you sought the answer from a different perspective.

I wasn't trying to be smart or evasive, I was simply trying to engage your mind to think God's thoughts after Him from His eternal perspective.

And when we come back next week we are going to see the beauty of God's answer by asking the question

Job 38:2 ² "Who is this that darkens counsel By words without knowledge?"