

October 8, 2006  
 I Know That My Redeemer Lives!  
 Isaiah 53:4-12 / I Corinthians 15:12-32 / Job 19:23-27

There is probably no other verse in the Book of Job that people are more familiar with than verse 25 of this chapter, where Job says: *"I Know That My Redeemer Lives."* It has been the theme, title or text of countless Easter Sermons, the title of a least one hymn, and was immortalized in an aria by George Fredrick Handel in his immensely popular and inspiring oratorio "The Messiah" which is still sung in churches and music halls the world over — every Christmas and Easter season!

**WHY DOES IT HAVE SUCH IMMENSE APPEAL?** It's simple. It's because it expresses with such absolute, unquestioned certainty, and even a faith-filled defiance (in the face of unbelieving skepticism and doubt) ***THE ESSENCE OF ALL TRUE CHRISTIAN HOPE!***

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And that's what I want to speak about today: what it was that took an emaciated, severely depressed, shadow of a man, at the darkest point in his life (when he stood only inches from the grave) and gave him such immense hope, that seemingly out of nowhere, his spirit leaps with joy, and soars above the clouds of his own bleak circumstances, and for just a short time he forgets ALL his troubles!

What caused such a dramatic change? Job caught a renewed glimpse of what awaited him (and awaits every believer) on the other side of the grave! What I'll call the God's Promise To Every Believer, and therefore The Blessed Hope of Everyone Who Believes in Jesus.

That's what I want to speak about today: Your blessed hope! What awaits you as a believer after the grave! Where you will spend eternity, and how the hope of that can fill your heart with joy even in the midst of suffering.

As we saw last week, Job had been reduced to nothing more than a depressed, emaciated, suffering, skeletal shadow of the man he used to be — toothless, and covered with boils... his flesh eaten by worms. Yet in today's text we see that merely by catching a glimpse of what God promises his saints in the life to come, his spirit is lifted to the heights of joy and elation — his whole demeanor changes — even if it was only for a short while.

So, let's see the THREE major aspects of our eternal hope 1.) Our Redeemer Lives. 2.) In the End He will stand upon the earth. And 3.) After our flesh is destroyed we will see Him with our own eyes. And let's also consider why they carry in them such immense power to dispel the black clouds of depression, and bring joy to the struggling or heavy heart.

So **FIRST**, let's consider the truth Job utters with such unshakable confidence that he wishes he could inscribe with an iron tool on lead, or engrave it on rock forever — "***I KNOW that my Redeemer Lives!***"

**DO YOU?** Could you stand in the presence of agnostics and skeptics who didn't think that was true, and with a faith so unshakable that you'd stake your life on it, declare to everyone within earshot: "I KNOW that my Redeemer LIVES!" Job knew it, and it lifted his spirit to an almost euphoric state of joy in the midst of unspeakable pain and suffering—simply by focusing on that truth. Simply by being brought to a renewed awareness that His Redeemer was ALIVE.

And here "Redeemer" is an obvious reference to the Messiah (whom we know to be Jesus) and whom Job already alluded to in chapter 16:19-21 as his "Advocate" or his "Intercessor who pleaded with God on his behalf." In his own day, hundreds and hundreds of years before He ever came to be incarnate in the person of Jesus, Job could say "I KNOW HE'S ALIVE!" (and he meant even now as I speak)!

It merely confirms what Jesus Himself would later say when He told the Jews in John 8:56: "***Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.***" You are not yet 50 years old, the Jews said to him, and you have seen Abraham?! "***I tell you the truth,***" Jesus said, "***before Abraham was born, I am.***"

And it wasn't just Abraham who "saw Jesus day and was glad." It was Job as well. The sure knowledge that Jesus was alive brought a flood of Joy to Job's heart! The same has been true for numerous, numerous suffering saints throughout history. Spurgeon, when he was laid up in bed suffering from gout and his occasional bouts of depression, used to have his wife read him the Gospels, or books that focused on the present work of Jesus in ministering to His saints — like Richard Sibbes, "The Bruised Reed," or William Bridge's — "A Lifting Up for the Downcast."

And even from Scripture itself, when Peter and the rest of the disciples are persecuted in Acts chapter 4, they look to Jesus and receive renewed strength and joy and boldness. Stephen, when being stoned to death for the faith in Acts 7, looks up into heaven and sees Jesus seated at the right hand of God and is given joy and an other worldly calmness in facing his death. He's even

given the ability to forgive his murderers as they are killing him! They didn't just see Jesus as one who had lived, but as one who was still very much alive — and it gave them inner strength and peace.

Yet, when we go through difficult times, and lose sight of the truth that JESUS IS ALIVE and WELL and PRESENTLY REIGNING OVER PLANET EARTH – when our own personal circumstances, or the world situation turn our focus away from Him to focus on them, our spirit's can wane, and we can wrestle with doubt, get discouraged, and grow spiritually lethargic.

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That's what happened with Job numerous times prior to this morning's text — his circumstances seemed to imply his Redeemer couldn't be ALIVE or REIGNING over all the earth (including his circumstances), for if He was in control, how could he possibly allow Job to suffer as he was?

Yet, today, after weeks of bleak hopelessness, God (who had been so silent and distant and inactive up to this point) seems to intervene (and out of nowhere) flood Job's consciousness with a divine infusion of faith — a renewed unshakable conviction that Jesus was alive!

And because God does, Job's whole being is energized, his spirits are lifted, and his heart is filled with joyful yearnings! It's a reminder of just how much inner strength, and liberation from fear, and power over hopelessness, and deliverance from despair is imparted to our souls by nothing other than the knowledge and inner conviction that "Jesus is ALIVE."

*Which means that even the most profound of truths can become old and stale to us over time, and we can tend to forget the inner strength and sustenance they once imparted to our souls — until we hear the testimony of another, and we realize we once stood in their shoes.*

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I was reminded of that this week when I was reading Ravi Zacharias book "Cries of the Heart" where he shares the story of his conversion. He was a High Caste Hindu living in the city of New Delhi, India, when his life was revolutionized by the truth that Jesus Christ was alive and he could know God personally. He writes:

*"I cannot resist thinking of that most poignant moment of my past. I was seventeen years old, when, with neither great intensity nor great anguish, I came to the recognition that life had very little meaning. The more I pondered its harsh implication the closer I drew to a decision. That decision was to choose the way of suicide. I found myself after that attempt lying in a hospital bed, having expelled all the poison that I had taken, but unsure if I would recover. There on that bed, with a dehydrated body,*

*the Scriptures were read to me. The flooding of my heart with the news that Jesus Christ could come into my life [that is, that Jesus was alive today and not just an antiquated religious leader from the past as in Hinduism and Buddhism] and that I could know God personally, defies the depths to which the truth overwhelmed me. In that moment with a simple prayer of trust, the change from a desperate heart to one that found fullness of meaning became a reality for me. God reached down to a teenager in a hospital bed in the city of New Delhi, a mega-city of teeming millions. Imagine! God cared enough to hear my cry. How incredible that He has a personal interest in the struggles of our lives."*

Could you STILL say the same? Didn't the news that Jesus Christ was ALIVE, and that you could have a personal relationship with God once "flood your heart," and "overwhelm you to depths which defied words"? Do you remember that time?

I do. I can remember when the truth of that fact first dawned upon my consciousness, and how it changed the way I looked at everything — believing that Jesus was actually alive, and not just an antiquated religious leader of the past like Buddha, or Mohammed.

Do YOU remember that time? Does the truth of it still enthrall you? Or has it become somewhat "stale truth" over time — truth that still sustains you, but no longer enthralls you like it did at first? (Like the believers in the Church at Ephesus, who according to Revelation 2:4, had "*lost their first love.*"

You see, if we read the passage correctly, we will see it was the renewed conviction THAT HIS REDEEMER WAS ALIVE that brought Job renewed comfort and inexpressible joy in the midst of his suffering — even though things would continue to go miserably in his life for a short while longer!

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Then SECONDLY, Job's hope and joy doesn't merely stem from the fact that His Redeemer is alive, even as He speaks. It also stems from the fact that he knew, "that in the END (that is, at the END OF TIME as we know it, when God will RESTORE ALL THINGS (Acts 3:21) — at the END OF THE AGE, or the RENEWAL OF ALL THINGS, as Jesus put it ) His Redeemer would stand upon the EARTH!"

The phrase, "In the end He will STAND upon the earth" is a declaration of the divine victory! A declaration of completion! Of the ultimate fulfillment of God's eternal plan of redemption, when Jesus will have defeated all the enemies of God, including the last enemy — death itself!

And notice where Jesus will stand or reside AFTER His victory is complete — He will stand on the EARTH! In the END, when it's all finished, that is where He will reside—which confirms once again what I said a few weeks ago:

***Job's eternal hope is NOT one of eternity with Jesus in an ethereal HEAVEN. Not one of JOB being taken up into HEAVEN to live there forever, but one of Jesus returning in victory to reign upon the EARTH — a RESTORED, REJUVENATED, SIN-PURGED EARTH!***

It will be the culmination of God's eternal plan, and the answer to the prayers of billions upon billions of Christians throughout history who prayed: ***"THY KINGDOM COME, THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN."*** That is, "Thy Kingdom come on EARTH, and Thy will be done on EARTH, just as it is now done in HEAVEN." It's not just a nice thought, or a lofty ideal, it's praying for what God intends to do, and ultimately will do when one future day He will establish his Kingdom on EARTH, so that His will may be done on EARTH, just as it is now done in HEAVEN.

Randy Alcorn in his superb and much needed book "Heaven" (which I'd like to make required reading for every Christian) puts it this way, zeroing in on the same theme from a different text:

***"God's plan of the ages is 'to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ' (Eph. 1:10). 'All things' is broad and inclusive — nothing will be left out... The hymn "This is my Father's World," expresses this truth in its final words: "Jesus who died shall be satisfied, and earth and heaven be one." Just as God and mankind are reconciled in Christ, so too the dwellings of God and mankind —Heaven and Earth— will be reconciled in Christ. As God and man will be forever united in Jesus, so Heaven and Earth will forever be united in the new physical universe where we will live as resurrected beings. To affirm anything less is to understate the redemptive work of Christ... Heaven is God's home. Earth is our home. Jesus Christ, the God-man forever links God and mankind, and thereby forever links Heaven and Earth. And as Ephesians 1:10 demonstrates, this idea of Earth and Heaven becoming one is explicitly biblical... God's plan is that there be no more gulf between the spiritual and the physical worlds. There will be no divided loyalties or divided realms. There will be one cosmos, and one universe united under one Lord — forever. This is the unstoppable plan of God. This is where history is headed."***

And can I myself add: ***"That's why Jesus told His disciples to pray for it!"***

You see, *NO ONE* was more aware that we live in a fallen world where we suffer the consequences of sin, than Job — a world full of violence, robbery and the death of innocent people — crime, and sickness, and war, and natural disasters, and pain, and perverted desires, and ignorance, and debilitating illnesses, and physical decay and death. Job was well-acquainted with all those things.

But he also knew that they were NOT the last word! He knew that's NOT how it would always be! Something he makes plain by using the word "REDEEMER."

In Hebrew the word for "Redeemer" is "Go'el." And as Mike Mason points out the word Go'el: *"had two general applications. In daily usage its primary meaning was "one who restores," or "one who puts something back into its original pristine condition." For Christians who know the Lord not only as their Creator, but as their re-Creator, this primary meaning of the word go'el is rich in connotation."*

The same is true for the word "REDEMPTION." To redeem is to buy something back so that it may be retuned or restored to its original place, state, or condition — and thus enabled to fulfill its original role or purpose. That's what God did when He "redeemed His people out of Egypt." He RETURNED them, or RESTORED them to their rightful place in the Promised Land, so that they might fulfill His original purposes and intentions for them.

"Redemption" means a change, a transformation or a restoration. We see that as well in Romans 8:23 where Paul says "We ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies!" Not the destruction of our bodies. Nor even the elimination or doing away with of our bodies! Because redemption does not mean the elimination of the old, but the transformation or restoration of the old! As Paul even said two verses earlier, "The creation itself will be liberated from it's bondage to decay..."

God isn't going to do away with this world or our bodies, He's going to liberate and restore them to the way they were before the Fall — before sin and its effects so marred and distorted them. That's what redemption means!

Which means Anthony Hoekema is right when he says:

*"The total work of Christ is nothing less than to redeem this entire creation from the effects of sin. That purpose will not be accomplished until God has ushered in the new earth; until Paradise Lost has become Paradise Regained."*

THAT is the glorious vision which Job (WITH THE EYES OF FAITH) catches a momentary glimpse of, filling his heart with inexpressible joy! He saw the Day when Jesus would finally stand upon the EARTH He created to RULE over it, as it's victorious, exalted KING, after having "redeemed it" from all the polluting and corrosive effects of sin, or "restored it" to it's original pristine perfection!

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Which brings us to our **LAST** point. Job's heart is filled with inexpressible joy and yearning, not only by the fact that He knows Jesus lives, nor solely that Jesus will one day stand on the EARTH as it's reigning KING, but also by the fact that he himself will stand on the earth with Jesus, and see Him with his own eyes — after he has died or his "skin has been destroyed." Not as a disembodied spirit, but as a resurrected saint! Not as a ghost-like apparition, but as a person living in a redeemed or restored body! ***"In my FLESH,"*** says Job, ***"I will see God! How my heart yearns within me!"*** (Vv. 26-27)

As R. A. Torrey, first president of Moody Bible Institute once wrote: ***"We will not be disembodied spirits in the world to come, but redeemed spirits, in redeemed bodies, in a redeemed universe."***

YET YOU KNOW WHAT? 2/3 of Americans who say they believe in a resurrection from the dead, also believe they will not have bodies after the resurrection. In an article entitled "U.S. Christians Doubt Bodily Resurrection," the author writes:

***"Most Christians in the U.S. don't believe they will experience a resurrection of their bodies when they die, putting them at odds with a core teaching of Christianity, reported Scripps Howard News Service (at Ohio University). 36%... said "yes" to the question "Do you believe, that after you die, your physical body will be resurrected someday?" while another 54% said they do not believe and 10 % were undecided.... The findings surprised many top theologians since it seems to put American Christians in conflict with both the Nicene Creed and the Apostle's Creed which declare the resurrection of the body." (Not to mention the Bible!)***

Al Mohler, president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary said in response:

***"I am continually confronted by Christians, even active members of major churches, who have never heard this taught in their local congregations."***

And Randy Alcorn citing similar statistics says:

***"Though Jesus in His resurrected body proclaimed, "I am not a ghost" (Luke 24:39), countless Christians think they will be ghosts in Heaven. I know this because I've talked***

*with many of them. They think they'll be disembodied spirits, wraiths. The magnificent, cosmos-shaking victory of Christ's resurrection—by definition a physical triumph over physical death in a physical world—escapes them. If Jesus has been a ghost, if we would be ghosts, then redemption would not have been accomplished." "Jesus," he says, "walked the earth in His resurrection body for forty days, showing us how we would live as resurrected human beings. In effect, He also demonstrated where we would live as resurrected human beings—on Earth."*

And then we wonder why so many Christians lack meaning and joy in their Christian walk. For after all, did Paul not say that if there is no resurrection, *"our faith is futile, and we are to be pitied more than all men"*? Notice Paul did **NOT SAY** that if there is **NO HEAVEN** your faith is futile, or that if there is **NO HEAVEN** we are to be pitied more than all men (though that is how many interpret it).

No, what he says is that if there is **NO RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD**, life is futile! If the **DEAD ARE NOT RAISED** (and he means to be clothed with immortal and imperishable physical bodies) then we are to be pitied more than all men! It's Paul's way of saying what Job is saying in our verses for this morning: That what gives meaning and purpose to life is NOT the hope of ghostlike existence in some ethereal heaven, but the hope of a bodily resurrection on a renewed earth!

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Maybe that's why much of the evangelism in the Book of Acts is (unlike ours) so heavily resurrection focused! The cross is never ignored, but the resurrection of Jesus and the resurrection of those who trust in Him is a prominent part of their message which has somehow come to be dropped from our preaching.

In Peter's sermon in Acts 2, he spends one verse (v. 23) speaking of the crucifixion, and the next 12 verses (vv. 24-35) expounding on the resurrection, combining both thoughts in his summary statement in verse 36.

In chapter 3 it's an equal balance. In chapter 4 we're told the Sadducees were greatly disturbed, because *"the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead."* And after being told not to speak again in the name of Jesus we read: "With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all." Acts 17:18 says: *"Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection (at the Aeropagus)"* and it wasn't even Easter Sunday!

Acts 23:6: *"I stand on trial here today because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead."*  
 Preaching before Felix, he says in Acts 24:15: *"I have the same hope as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked."* And in 24:21 he says in summary: *"It is concerning the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you today."*

How then could we ever get to a point in the church where 2/3 of Christians could say they don't believe in the resurrection, and Al Mohler could say: *"I am continually confronted by Christians... who have never heard this taught in their local congregations."*

Apart from it our faith is futile and we are to be pitied, says Paul! It's the core of our hope! It's what gives us joy even in suffering! We will see Him with our own eyes, in our new, resurrected, immortal, imperishable, restored, perfected physical bodies!!! *"The Lord Jesus Christ,"* says Paul in Phil. 3:20-21, *"will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His own glorious body!"* That's the promise of God!

And in addition to being with Christ for all eternity, you'll not only see your believing loved ones who have died in the Lord as ghost-like apparitions, you'll touch them! You'll hug them! You'll walk with them and feel the dirt under your feet! You'll talk with them, and sit down at table and eat with them!

You'll wake up each day to spend intimate fellowship with them, work beside them, worship with them, and just plain enjoy the presence of God, and the glories of the new earth with them! An earth more wonderful than anything you can imagine!

(Me - my grandfather / deathbed conversion / died while I was in the D.R. but I will get to see him in on the New Earth!) That's our hope, according to the Bible! Eternity with our REDEEMER, and all He has REDEEMED, on a REDEEMED EARTH, in a REDEEMED UNIVERSE!

How could our hearts NOT yearn within us? It's such a blessed hope!