

God Speaks To Job

Job 38:1-41

Introduction

We come to the final section of Job. In this final section God shows up. God will humble Job by asking a series of questions and later exalt Job to a place of honor and restoration.

Christopher Morley wrote; “I had a million questions to ask God; but when I met Him, they all fled my mind; and it didn’t seem to matter.”

The storm Elihu described in the distance has arrived and out of that storm God will speak. Wiersbe rightly points out; “The answer to Job’s problems was not an explanation about God, such as the three friends and Elihu had given, but a revelation of God.”

The Bible speaks of General Revelation. Gordon Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest write; “General revelation refers to the disclosure of God in nature, in providential history and in the moral law in the heart, whereby all people at all times and places gain a rudimentary understanding of the Creator and His moral demand” (*Integrative Theology; 1:61*).

We often want answers from God. And when we least expect it—God offers His presence as the explanation.

Job will be asked a series of questions about God’s creation and creatures. The questions can be boiled down to three questions;

- Can you explain My creation? (Job 38:1-38)
- Can you oversee My creation? (Job 38:39-39:30)
 - Job’s first response (Job 40:1-5)
- Can you subdue My creation? (Job 40:6-41:34)
 - Job’s second response (Job 42:1-6)

The first series of questions deal with the power and wisdom of God in bringing the universe into existence. The second his care of that universe and the third is focused on two mysterious creatures called behemoth and leviathan and how they are not able to be tamed or subdued.

In this first chapter (38) God will speak about the earth (vv.1-7; 17-18); the oceans (8-11; 16); light (vv. 12-15; 19-21); snow and rain (22-30; 34-38) and the stars (vv.31-33).

The poetic passages in this section soar. The intensity of emotion—the appreciation of the visible universe and the invisible world—and insight into the human condition are matchless. Perhaps the most amazing thing about the passage is not simply what is said—but what remains unsaid. God doesn’t answer the question of Job’s suffering or meaning of suffering. He doesn’t refer to the opening drama in the first two chapters. He doesn’t address Job’s dream of life after death and doesn’t offer a vision of the future Messiah. He reveals no deep secret which will unravel the mystery of God and God’s ways in this world! In fact—on its face it may seem irrelevant to the person who wants real answers to the problem of pain and the mystery of suffering! We are left with the strange suspicion that our answers do not come by knowing more about God but knowing God. We want to know why people suffer—and God invites us to know Him—to trust Him to love Him. He invites us to consider his glory and majesty, his authority and wisdom; his power and strength; his perfection and holiness; his dominion and rule; his mercy and love—and for some that is unacceptable.

There are those who say they want to hear from God. But when God speaks they refuse to listen. They have ears to hear—but they are full of the wax of sin. They have a heart of stone and not of flesh. But the person who wants to hear from God—who want the gates of pride and rebellion to come crashing down; who desire in humility to acknowledge their sin, and allow brokenness to bring them to a place of prayer and restoration—God has and does speak.

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The Lord Speaks (vv.1-3)

Job 38:1–11 (NKJV) *Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said:*

Job had waited a very long time for God to speak.

“. . .the Lord” (YAHWEH or Jehovah)

I think its interesting that the text says “the Lord answered Job”—not his friends. Do you think the friends and young Elihu really expected God to show up and speak?

It could be that the friends of Job are true believers—but have no real desire to hear from God.

Job has repeatedly mentioned “If only God were here He would vindicate me and tell me why this evil has come”. In Job 13:15; “I will defend my ways to his face”. Job cried; “behold, I have prepared my case”; “then call, and I will answer; or let me speak, and do thou reply to me” “why have you hid your face. . .” (see Job 13:18; 22; 24). From the deepest part of his grief and anguish Job cried; “Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat! I would lay my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments. I would learn what he would answer me, and understand what he would say to me. Would he contend with me in the greatness of his power? No, he would give heed to me. There an upright man could reason with him, and I should be acquitted for ever by my judge” (Job 23:3-7).

For 37 chapters we have heard the arguments and pleadings that represent the sum and substance of human wisdom.

But the storm has arrived. And God speaks. We want God to speak in the sunshine and the light of day!

But sometimes God speaks in the storm. In the storm speech can sometimes be frightening. Job felt confident that his speeches have been filled with passion and pity and wisdom and knowledge.

2“Who is this who darkens counsel By words without knowledge?

The Lord bursts Job’s bubble with his opening statement; who is this who darkens counsel By words without knowledge? In rare accuracy the Living Bible paraphrases the statement “Why are you using your ignorance to deny My providence?” (ouch!). The NLT; “Who is this that questions my wisdom with such ignorant words”. The first words out of God’s mouth—makes it clear that Job was ignorant of God’s counsel—oblivious to His plans—unfamiliar with His works.

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The word ‘darken’ means to obfuscate—or distort—or place something in false light or bad light. Counsel means a plan or council or design. Without knowledge is a reference to the fact that Job was unaware of God’s confrontation with Satan.

The Lord isn’t questioning Job’s integrity or sincerity but rather Job’s ability to explain the ways of God in this world. Did Job speak truth about God? I think the answer is yes. Did Job’s words sometimes lack humility? I think the answer is yes. Let’s put it a little differently—“Did Job know something about God?” The answer is yes. “Did Job know everything about God?” Knowledge of the limits of our wisdom is the first step toward wisdom and humility.

3Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me.

The Lord invites Job to ‘man-up’. Brace yourself. In the Old KJV it says ‘gird up your loins’ like a soldier—prepare for a battle.

Have you ever had a phone solicitor invite you to participate in a so called research project? To fill out their questionnaire?

But imagine God shows up with a series of questions; and your answers have eternal weight and bring consequences forever! God will ply Job with about forty questions! Questions which an army of seasoned scientists working over the course of two thousand years have not fully satisfied.

Sometimes we go astray. Sometimes we need discipline. Now God demands an answer from Job. Will God sometimes discipline his children? Correct us? Instruct us? God’s discipline sometimes comes when we fail to listen carefully; to correct or redirect us; to get our attention; to keep us from hurting ourselves or hurting others; to keep us from dishonoring His name; or to keep us from completely undermining or bringing shame to the gospel. Jacob wrestled an angel (Gen.32:24-30). Moses met Yahweh in the burning bush (Ex.3:2-22). Saul meets Jesus in a blinding light on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-9). The Bible has God speaking in a burning bush and smoking oven and a ladder of angels, a still small voice and a wheel within a wheel. Sometimes a trumpet and sometimes a sheet filled with unclean animals.

And now God speaks—in the longest confrontation recorded in the Scriptures. Five whole chapters.

If God showed up and spoke to you like he speaks to Job—how would you respond? Terror? Fear? Do you remember the story of the soft spoken Quaker who tamed his stubborn mule by hitting him over the head with a two-by-four? When he was asked since the Quaker’s embrace a philosophy of non-violence how could he hit the mule in what seem like a violent fashion. The Quaker explained before you can train a mule “Thee must first get his attention”.

Consider The Earth (vv.4-7)

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4“Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding.

The Lord begins with a discussion about Creation! This is bound to make all my Creation Science friends very happy! Ken Ham from answers in Genesis is fond of saying about the Creation of our solar system and the formation of our planet earth; “you weren’t there”!

Wiersbe: “Knowledge of our own ignorance is the first step toward true wisdom”.

We might be tempted to answer the question. What in fact is the question? We might say; what holds up the world? Or Why does the law of gravity keep the earth in its present orbit?

The Lord’s language is full of indignation; ‘tell me if you have understanding’ ‘surely you know’ (v.6). Are we shocked that God is so rough with Job? Do we expect a much more gentle and sympathetic God?

5Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it?

Who determines the earth’s dimension and size? (v.5)

Who supports the earth and holds it in orbit? (v.6)

Who caused the stars and angels to sing at creation?” (v.7)

Who decided how big the earth should be? Why must it be in its present proportions? Who determines where the sea stops and the land begins? Why do we have the ratio of sea and land that presently exists? Job can you make the morning come—when you are ready? Job do you know how the sun generates its energy and produces light? Can you make thunder, or lightning or cause the wind to blow—in what ever direction you desire? Are you able to bring the dew or the frost?

Job is being asked whether human beings can control the climate! Can all of humanity on the face of the planet make the global temperatures higher or lower? Job do you understand the life-cycles of the life forms on this planet?

Does God really expect an answer from Job—or are the questions an invitation to consider the power and wonder and splendor of a self-existent Creator? Does God desire Job to take up cosmology or geology or astronomy?

6To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone,

The Lord uses poetic language. He compares Himself to a master builder who surveys a site, makes off the boundaries, lays the cornerstone and the builds the structure.

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Imagine you are creating a universe. You decide to put the galaxy and the solar system and the sun and the earth in its proper place to make the perfect environment for life in all its forms on this planet.

7When the morning stars sang together, And all the sons of God shouted for joy?

In the ancient world it was believed that the stars and the planets were living beings. The bright blazing light indications of life—and their movement. Living things move.

I suspect here ‘the morning stars’ are not simply a reference to the astronomical bodies in the solar system or galaxy but rather they are a reference to the supernatural beings alive at the beginning of Creation.

We might think of these morning stars as angels or angelic beings—but again that may be a limited understanding. Some (Michael Heiser) suggests this may be a reference to the hierarchy of created beings who were with God at the Creation of the Universe and the formation of our planet.

The expression ‘sons of God’ is *bene elohim* .

Job wasn't there!

Supernatural beings were there!

Consider The Sea (vv.8-11)

8“Or who shut in the sea with doors, When it burst forth and issued from the womb;

How did the oceans form? Who gave birth to the seas?

9When I made the clouds its garment, And thick darkness its swaddling band;

The Lord clothes the seas with clouds and darkness.

10When I fixed My limit for it, And set bars and doors;

The Lord established the size, shape and dimensions of all the shorelines on the surface of the planet earth.

11When I said, ‘This far you may come, but no farther, And here your proud waves must stop!’

The Lord tells Job; consider the earth (vv.1-7); consider the sea (vv.8-11); consider the days (vv. 12-15); consider the vast dimensions of the universe (vv.16-24); consider the rain and ice (vv. 25-30).

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Consider The Days (vv.12-15)

Job 38:12–41 (NKJV) 12 “Have you commanded the morning since your days began, And caused the dawn to know its place,

Do we even understand the question? Job is being asked—have you ever caused the sun to rise or directed the morning to appear?

13 That it might take hold of the ends of the earth, And the wicked be shaken out of it?

14 It takes on form like clay under a seal, And stands out like a garment.

15 From the wicked their light is withheld, And the upraised arm is broken.

Have you ever spread daylight over the earth to bring an end to the wickedness of the night? (v. 13)—or we might say—have you ever made the sun come up—in order to make the darkness disappear? Have you ever made the sun come up or the light—and placed that light in motion to show off the beautiful features of the natural wonders on the face of the planet (v.14) or have you ever set the light in motion to expose the haunts of the wicked? (v.15).

The assertion is that wickedness would run wild if not for God’s restraint.

I have posted pictures of the sunrise and sunset on Facebook! I don’t think it’s the same as making the sun rise and making the sun set.

Consider The Vast Dimensions Of The Universe (vv.16-24)

16 “Have you entered the springs of the sea? Or have you walked in search of the depths?

Human beings have now mapped the ocean floors—with deep caverns and mountain ranges under water. The book of Genesis says that when the Flood began “all the fountains of the deep were broken up” (Gen.7:11). The Hebrew word for broken up means to rip open or burst forth; implying great underground or subterranean waters existed below the surface of the earth when these waters ‘burst forth’. Some creation scientists believe the Mid-Oceanic Ridge fissures are possibly evidence or remains of the scar which caused this water to burst forth. Walt Brown popularized what is known as the hydroplane theory. The very word ocean or ‘springs of the sea’ translates a word that means ‘that which burst forth from the womb.

17 Have the gates of death been revealed to you? Or have you seen the doors of the shadow of death?

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Have you ever taken the journey to death's door? Do you remember Job's desire to die? To find some bit of peace in death's dark place (10:18-22). But is that such a good idea if you have never been there?

18Have you comprehended the breadth of the earth? Tell Me, if you know all this.

You might think; I know the breadth of the earth.

The mean radius of Earth is 3,959 miles (6,371 kilometers). However, Earth is not quite a sphere. The planet's rotation causes it to bulge at the equator. Earth's equatorial diameter is 7,926 miles (12,756 kilometers), but from pole to pole, the diameter is 7,900 miles (12,720 km) — a difference of only 40 miles (64 km).

19“Where is the way to the dwelling of light? And darkness, where is its place,

Where does light come from? How is it possible that it can be light on side the planet and dark on the other?

20That you may take it to its territory, That you may know the paths to its home?

21Do you know it, because you were born then, Or because the number of your days is great?

22“Have you entered the treasury of snow, Or have you seen the treasury of hail,

23Which I have reserved for the time of trouble, For the day of battle and war?

24By what way is light diffused, Or the east wind scattered over the earth?

25“Who has divided a channel for the overflowing water, Or a path for the thunderbolt,

26To cause it to rain on a land where there is no one, A wilderness in which there is no man;

27To satisfy the desolate waste, And cause to spring forth the growth of tender grass?

28Has the rain a father? Or who has begotten the drops of dew?

29From whose womb comes the ice? And the frost of heaven, who gives it birth?

30The waters harden like stone, And the surface of the deep is frozen.

31“Can you bind the cluster of the Pleiades, Or loose the belt of Orion?

32Can you bring out Mazzaroth in its season? Or can you guide the Great Bear with its cubs?

33Do you know the ordinances of the heavens? Can you set their dominion over the earth?

34“Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, That an abundance of water may cover you?

35Can you send out lightnings, that they may go, And say to you, ‘Here we are!’?

36Who has put wisdom in the mind? Or who has given understanding to the heart?

37Who can number the clouds by wisdom? Or who can pour out the bottles of heaven,

38When the dust hardens in clumps, And the clods cling together?

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39“Can you hunt the prey for the lion, Or satisfy the appetite of the young lions,

40When they crouch in their dens, Or lurk in their lairs to lie in wait?

41Who provides food for the raven, When its young ones cry to God, And wander about for lack of food?

Conclusion

Does the passage invite the reader to make inquiry into the mysteries of the universe? Does the passage provide answers to those mysteries? Or is the passage inviting the reader to beware of placing the Almighty God of the Bible into a neat little package that satisfies the finite mind?

We are given the slightest glimpse into Isaiah 55:8 where God says “My thoughts are not your thoughts nor my ways your ways”.

God is inviting us to take glimpse of his greatness, mystery, authority, wonder, majesty, to provide a foundation to consider his greatness, and wisdom and glory.

We want answers. God invites us to see Himself. Do you remember when Phillip said to Jesus, “Lord, show us the Father, and we shall be satisfied” (John 14:8).

Has your vision blurred? Do you find it hard to see God in a world that is marred by sin and broken by rebellion?