

The Lord Challenges Job

Job 40:1-24

Introduction

In chapter 40 the Lord challenges Job to respond like a man and capture and tame a dinosaur!

In chapters 38 and 39 the Lord speaks and Job is humbled. The Lord begins with a series of questions about creation (chapter 38:1-38) and creatures (38:39-39:30). In chapter 40 we are met with a brief description of Job's reaction (40:1-5). The Lord confronts Job and Job's confession is marked by the simple words (vv.3-5); "I am nothing; how can I ever find the answers; I will cover my mouth with my hand and remain silent." The Lord asks a series of questions that reveal God's wisdom and power. The Lord will ask Job about his ability to capture and control two fearful creatures; behemoth (40:15-24) and leviathan (chapter 41:1-34). Bible scholars are sharply divided over the identity of these two creatures.

The chapters ask the broad questions; can you explain God's creation (chapter 38) God's creatures (38:39-39:30); and can you subdue and control creation (40:6-41:34)?

The Lord's Rebuke (vv.1-2)

Job 40:1-14 (NKJV) Moreover the Lord answered Job, and said:

2 "Shall the one who contends with the Almighty correct Him? He who rebukes God, let him answer it."

Shall the faultfinder contend with the Almighty? A faultfinder is one who reproaches, scorns, censures another. It is related to the verb admonish or correct ('correct Him?').

We live in a world where scholars, critics, pundits and philosophers would answer this verse of course we can both contend and correct the Almighty.

Do you remember what else Job said about God? God is skillful, knowledgeable, powerful, and good. How then does he find fault with God? Job knows he is deficient, inadequate, incompetent to control the universe.

It is interesting to me how careless people are with the God of the Bible. Interesting and frightening. We seem to have lost the reverence for God; or to remember that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the true and living God. What kind of God is God? Job's suffering has cast doubts on God's purposes in creation; his control of creation and his personal care in that creation.

Does Job really want to contend and correct the Lord? The Lord in effect says; if you want to do so—answer me now! The Lord rebukes Job. The rebuke comes from Job's foolish assertion that Job was wise enough to challenge the wisdom of God's choices for Job.

We are overwhelmed by our sympathy for Job; because we too look at the series of hardships in Job's life and ask the same question; Has God dealt fairly with Job?

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But did Job have a better plan for his life than God?

Does the God who created the heavens and the earth and all life; who created and planned the universe know what his best for each of creatures he has fearfully and wonderfully made (Ps. 139:14)?

There is a subtle and sometimes not so subtle assertion when we question God; not simply a declaration of our ignorance but an assertion of our pride; we know better than God. We are wiser than God. We should be the ones who gage the presence and proportion of pain, suffering, hardship, difficulty and tribulation in our lives.

Many people believe they need no input or discipline from God or anyone else for that matter. The Bible asserts that God knows what He is doing in both his plans and purposes.

Job's Reply (vv.3-5)

3Then Job answered the Lord and said:

4“Behold, I am vile; What shall I answer You? I lay my hand over my mouth.

Now Job speaks. These are the first words Job dares to speak. “Behold, I am vile.” The word vile means not simply insignificant and unworthy! It means more than that! We cannot fit the word ‘self-righteous’ into that word. McKenna says; “The snowman of self-righteousness melts before God in the confession, “I am unworthy” and the admission “I don’t know” (see p. 295).

In chapter 31:37 Job said he would approach God like a prince; “I would declare to Him the number of my steps; Like a prince I would approach Him.”

Not “Behold, I am a good person.” Not “compare me with everyone else in the world and you can see that I am a good and decent person.” Job believed he deserved a fair hearing. Job believed that God was unfair in allowing Job’s suffering. Note—God did not cause Job’s suffering but clearly God allowed Job’s suffering.

The expression “I lay my hand over my mouth” means I have nothing to say. This is an act of contrition, submission and humility.

In the book of Job—Job describes that it used to be when Job entered the room noble men would cover their mouths with their hands (29:9).

5Once I have spoken, but I will not answer; Yes, twice, but I will proceed no further.”

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Job is broken, terrified. The passage means; “I have already said too much.” Job admits; that he had misspoken; Job had made a terrible mistake; questioning the Lord was not a good idea; and that he would dare not do it again. What’s the point? What’s the lesson? Humility before God?

Human beings are for the most part void; clueless; unaware of our profound sinful condition and God’s absolute holiness. Job promises to say no more; he is silenced and humbled; and he knew that if he said anything else it would only reinforce Job’s ignorance and irreverence and wisely Job chooses silence!

We’ve all heard the expression; ‘silence is golden’. Warren Wiersbe in the most practical way says; “Until we are silenced before God, He can’t do for us what needs to be done. As long as we defend ourselves and argue with God, He can’t work for us and in us to accomplish His plan toward us” (TBEC Wisdom and Poetry; p. 80).

The Bible teaches that sometimes silence before God is the right response; “Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it is an evil time” (Amos 5:13). “Keep silence before me, O islands; and let people renew their strength: let them come near; then let them speak: let us come near together to judgment” (Isaiah 41:1).

Job in effect says; “I’m done talking.” But the Lord continues the conversation.

Why not stop here? Why does God continue to question Job? Why does God feel the need to continue the conversation? Hasn’t Job had enough? Isn’t Job sufficiently broken? Isn’t Job sufficiently repentant and sincere? McKenna suggests; “He (Job) is learning to listen to God, but hearing alone is not healing. God has more to say and Job has more to learn” (see p. 295).

Once again we pretend to know things that only God knows. The Lord continues—apparently more needs to be said.

The Lord’s Divine Justice (vv.6-14)

6Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said:

7“Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me:

Whenever the Lord says; ‘man up’—and I am going to question you and you will answer Me’ it might mean you are in trouble.

8“Would you indeed annul My judgment? Would you condemn Me that you may be justified?

The word annul means to make void; to break, to dissolve, to destroy.

Can human beings make void God’s judgment? Did the Lord mistreat Job? Accusations against God and His justice are accusations against God’s character.

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We know that slander against a person is a terrible sin. How then can we slander God and feel no shame?

Once again Job had accused God of being unjust in his treatment of Job (6:29; 27:1-17).

McKenna (p.299): In paraphrase God is asking:

Do you refute My wisdom?
Do you condemn My justice?
Do you doubt My power?
Do you reject My voice?

We might add; Do you do all these things in order to make yourself look good or right? That you may be justified?

9Have you an arm like God? Or can you thunder with a voice like His?

These are not the questions of a petulant god insisting he have his own way. These are the statements of a self-existent being who has no equal!

The Lord in effect is asking Job; do you have the strength (the arm) of God? And what about your voice? Do you have the ability to save and judge the world?

We need to pause for a moment. The Lord in effect is saying; do you have the strength and power (holy wrath) to do what is necessary when it comes to judging the entire world? The Lord invites Job to take his foolish idea to the extreme; do you want to play the role of Deity; lets see how that will work out for you. Pour out your wrath on the guilty. Humble the proud.

The sinner might say; “I don’t want to judge the whole world—but I do want to judge my world!”

10Then adorn yourself with majesty and splendor; And array yourself with glory and beauty.

The passage is interesting. Before God lets Job be Lord and judge—the Lord in effect says; “put on the judges robes; put on the majestic robes of glory and beauty.

If you can do what God can do—demonstrate the fact—clothe yourself in glory; unleash your anger on the wicked (v.11); humble the proud (v.12a) crush the wicked (v.12b); bury all the wicked in the dust and imprison them in darkness (v.13).

11Disperse the rage of your wrath; Look on everyone who is proud, and humble him.

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12Look on everyone who is proud, and bring him low; Tread down the wicked in their place.

13Hide them in the dust together, Bind their faces in hidden darkness.

14Then I will also confess to you That your own right hand can save you.

The Lord in effect says; if you can robe yourself in righteousness; unleash your anger on the wicked; humble the proud; crush the wicked; bury in the dust all the wicked and imprison them in darkness—then I am willing to concede that you might be a person who save himself!

Do you want the role of self-deliverer?

But let's begin with a little test. If you can subdue behemoth and leviathan than you might qualify to execute judgment against a sinful world.

Several Bible teachers believe the creatures described are a hippopotamus—or an elephant or water buffalo (vv.15-24) and a crocodile (41:1-34).

The Lord's Revelation Of Human Weakness (vv.15-24)

Job 40:15–24 (NKJV)15“Look now at the behemoth, which I made along with you; He eats grass like an ox.

The name behemoth translates a Hebrew word—that means in its singular; cattle (*behemah*); but in the plural seems to suggest some super beast. Some early church fathers guessed elephant (Aquinas); others buffalo; others hippopotamus (Archer; Zuck; Wiersbe). Some think extinct animal; others mythological.

What does the text tell us about this beast? It is powerful; herbivorous, amphibian.

16See now, his strength is in his hips, And his power is in his stomach muscles.

17He moves his tail like a cedar; The sinews of his thighs are tightly knit.

The hippo enthusiastic takes this verse to mean the tail sways like a cedar in the sense of going back and forth. The hippo or elephant detractor say 'cedar' isn't a word that describes the rope-like tail.

Is the point of the passage to describe what the tail does or what the tail looks like?

18His bones are like beams of bronze, His ribs like bars of iron.

19He is the first of the ways of God; Only He who made him can bring near His sword.

What does this mean; 'first of the ways of God'? Could mean a reference to size and strength (see The Moody Bible Commentary; p.739).

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20 Surely the mountains yield food for him, And all the beasts of the field play there.

21 He lies under the lotus trees, In a covert of reeds and marsh.

22 The lotus trees cover him with their shade; The willows by the brook surround him.

23 Indeed the river may rage, Yet he is not disturbed; He is confident, though the Jordan gushes into his mouth,

24 Though he takes it in his eyes, Or one pierces his nose with a snare.

This creature cannot be captured intimidated or subdued. The creature cannot be controlled. A hippo could be captured and subdued—at least in the sense of restrained; but not domesticated. In effect the Lord says; if you can capture and subdue this great creature—I might be willing to concede that you have the power and wisdom and judge the world justly.

It becomes a type and a picture of evil.

The point of the passage is not to point to the existence of dinosaurs (although I believe that is the best explanation of the creature described). The point of the passage is to express the utter inability of humans in their weakness to control certain creatures.

At Got Questions (what does the Bible say about dinosaurs);

Nearly every ancient civilization has some sort of art depicting giant reptilian creatures. Petroglyphs, artifacts, and even little clay figurines found in North America resemble modern depictions of dinosaurs. Rock carvings in South America depict men riding diplodocus-like creatures and, amazingly, bear the familiar images of triceratops-like, pterodactyl-like, and tyrannosaurus rex-like creatures. Roman mosaics, Mayan pottery, and Babylonian city walls all testify to man's trans-cultural, geographically unbounded fascination with these creatures. Sober accounts like those of Marco Polo's *Il Milione* mingle with fantastic tales of treasure-hoarding beasts. In addition to the substantial amount of anthropic and historical evidences for the coexistence of dinosaurs and man, there are physical evidences, like the fossilized footprints of humans and dinosaurs found together at places in North America and West-Central Asia.

Read more: <http://www.gotquestions.org/dinosaurs-Bible.html#ixzz39cSGtsoY>

Michael Snyder in a recent article writes;

A fossil bed in China that is being called "Jurassic Park" has yielded perhaps the greatest dinosaur soft tissue discovery of all time. According to media reports, "nearly-complete skeletons" have been discovered that even include skin and feathers. But of course if these dinosaurs are really "160 million years old", that should be absolutely impossible. Needless to say, this shocking discovery is once again going to have paleontologists scrambling to find a way to prop up the popular myths that they have been promoting. What they have been

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telling us simply does not fit the facts. The truth is that this latest find is even more evidence that dinosaurs are far, far younger than we have traditionally been taught (see the Truth—blog spot).

Several soft tissue discoveries all in separate locations (Russia; China and Montana) are causing quite a stir.

We have been taught that dinosaurs existed millions of years ago. Russian scientists using carbon-14 dating have sampled dinosaur bones that they date under 30,000 years!

Conclusion

People who question criticize and scandalize God are in effect asserting their right to be God in their own lives!

There are people who believe God is either unfair or unjust or limited in His power.

There are those who are not satisfied with God's questions. People want answers. In the passage the Lord invites us to see the issue from God's perspective; we are invited to see a God who creates the universe and controls the universe and cares for the creatures in that universe.

Has Job come to the place where he sees God's power; the harmony of God's creation, and the justice of His way, and the sufficiency of His grace" (McKenna p. 296)?

We like to think that our knowledge and technology are growing; but it still stands small next to God's creative ways and creation.