

“When God Speaks”

Job 38-41

In these chapters that we’re going to look at, we are presented with a picture of a great big God. For 38 chapters, we have watched as Job and his friends have gone back and forth in debate about the reasons behind Job’s suffering. Each of his friends have offered their thoughts about God:

- Eliphaz bases his argument on experience
- Bildad bases his argument on tradition
- Zophar bases his argument on assumption

We were introduced last to a young man named Elihu who spoke last. He must have been an onlooker, a bystander in the crowd who listened as the men debated. He heard Job say that God must be against him. Out of a sense of righteous anger, Elihu speaks up and what he says is important. Unlike the others, Elihu bases his argument on revelation:

Job 32:8-9 - “But it is the spirit in man, the breath of the Almighty that makes him understand. It is not the old who are wise, nor the aged who understand what is right.”

For six straight chapters, Elihu magnifies the greatness of of God. His final words are found at the end of chapter 37:

Job 37:22-24 - “Out of the north comes golden splendor; God is clothed with awesome majesty. The Almighty—we cannot find Him; He is great in power; justice and abundant righteousness He will not violate. Therefore men fear Him; He does not regard any who are wise in their own conceit.”

Job needed to hear more than someone else’s ideas. Experience is not sufficient. Tradition may not apply. Assumption can be way off base. What Job needed was a revelation from God. He needed to hear God’s truth. The next voice that we are introduced to in the book is a voice of power and authority:

Job 38:1 - “Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind.”

Many commentators have suggested that a storm was brewing on the horizon as Elihu was finishing his speech. In fact, we find hints of this in some of what he says:

36:29 - “Can anyone understand the spreading of the clouds, the thunderings of His pavilion?”

36:32 - “He covers His hands with the lightning and commands it to strike the mark.”

37:2 - “Keep listening to the thunder of His voice and the rumbling that comes from His mouth.”

37:3 - “Under the whole heaven He lets it go, and His lightning to the corners of the earth.”

37:5 - “God thunders wondrously with His voice; He does great things that we cannot comprehend.”

It could very well have been that a storm was building in the distance as Elihu was speaking about the greatness of God. Perhaps he pointed out the dark clouds, the lightning strikes, and the rolls of thunder as proof that God is much bigger than Job can comprehend with his finite mind. All of the sudden, God speaks to Job out of the storm! Job has been questioning God’s justice and has desperately wanted his day in court. The speech that God gives to Job in these chapters is the longest recorded in Scripture that is spoken by God.

When God speaks, He begins by asking Job a question:

38:2 - “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to Me.”

In fact, God will ask Job some 77 questions that Job will not be able to answer, questions that deal with the most basic observations from creation. The point is that if Job can’t even understand how the world around him operates, what would ever make him think that he could fully understand the ways of the sovereign God who made it?

Job’s words have been words without knowledge, and God is about to take him to school. Keep in mind that God is not asking Job these questions to Job in an attempt to humiliate him. Instead, God is attempting to develop in Job a greater sense of trust and faith in God sovereign power, His watchful care, and His sufficient grace.

When God speaks to Job in these chapters, He does three things:

1. God confronts Job's PERCEPTION of life (38-39)

"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"

When God begins speaking, He doesn't answer any of Job's questions about His fairness. Nor does He give Job any insight into why suffering was allowed into his life. Instead, God responds to Job's questioning by questioning Job. Job thought he could put God on the witness stand, but it was God who ended up putting him on it.

Warren Wiersbe - *"The whole purpose of this interrogation was to make Job realize his own inadequacy and inability to meet God as an equal and defend his cause."*

He questions Job in order to reveal to him just how much of a great big God that He really is. Job will learn the truth:

Isaiah 55:8-9 - **"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts."**

God is much bigger than you and I realize. Our perception of life and circumstances can be way off. Sin has a way of distorting what we see and try to understand.

Job thought he knew some things in life, but God is going to show him that he really doesn't know anything at all.

God will question Job about the most basic processes of life:

The origin of the earth

38:4-7 - **"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"**

God doesn't begin by trying to prove that He was the One who created the earth. Instead, He simply reminds Job that Job wasn't there when He did it.

God is using the language of an architect or a builder. He's asking Job, "Were you there to sign off on My blueprints?" The earth has approximately:

- 57 million square miles of land surface
- 139 million square miles of water surface
- a circumference at the equator of 24,902 miles

The depth of the sea

38:8-11 - "Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb, when I made clouds its garment and thick darkness its swaddling band, and prescribed limits for it and set bars and doors, and said, 'Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stayed'?"

38:16 - "Have you entered into the springs of the sea, or walked in the recesses of the deep?"

God has placed restrictions on the ocean tides. The illustration God uses is that of an infant. He says, "When the sea was born, I put a diaper of darkness and a onesie of clouds on it, put it in a nursery that I Myself designed and then put up a baby gate."

Scientists have discovered the amazing effect that the moon has upon the ocean tides, which are caused by the moon's gravitational pull.

John MacArthur - *"The moon circles the earth and completes a full orbit around the earth every 27.3 days, traveling a distance of almost a million and a half miles each month. As the moon orbits the earth, it causes the earth to swell ever so slightly. The earth actually bulges out toward the moon, and this is what affect the water level of the oceans. As the earth rotates on its axis, these bulges move across the face of the earth creating two high and two low tides every day. Just this one characteristic of planet Earth and its bodies of water is absolutely vital to sustaining life on it."*

God asks Job, "Can you explain the wisdom behind all of this?"

The phenomena of the weather

38:22 - “Have you entered the storehouses of the snow, or have you seen the storehouses of the hail?”

38:28-30 - “Has the rain a father, or who has begotten the drops of dew? From whose womb did the ice come forth, and who has given birth to the frost of heaven? The waters become hard like stone, and the face of the deep is frozen.”

God asks, “Job, can you make it snow, or can you cause rain to all on the earth?”

Henry Morris - *“With the right combination of air turbulence and clouds, the complex forces generate an electrical field that produces lightning discharges and these violent electrical currents, in a complex energy exchange we do not yet fully understand, cause the small water droplets to bind together with others to form larger drops that then become too heavy to remain in the clouds and fall to the thirsty ground.”*

In a paraphrase of this passage, Eugene Peterson hones in on the vivid language that God uses:

Job 38:22-30 (Message) - “Have you every traveled to where the snow is made, seen the vault where hail is stockpiled, the arsenals of hail and snow that i keep in readiness for times of trouble and battle and war? Can you find your way to where lighting is launched, or to the place from which the wind blows? Who do you suppose carves canyons for the downpours of rain, and charts the route of thunderstorms that bring water to unvisited fields, deserts no one every lays eyes on, drenching the useless wastelands so they're carpeted with wildflowers and grass? And who do you think is the father of rain and dew, the mother of ice and frost? You don't for a minute imagine these marvels of weather just happen, do you?”

By the way, it is not irony that God speaks to Job from a whirlwind and references lighting. It was lighting that killed his flocks and servants, and it was a whirlwind that destroyed the house and killed his children. And yet by being given a revelation of God’s creation and control, Job is brought to a greater trust!

The vastness of the universe

38:31-33 - “Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades or loose the cords of Orion? Can you lead forth the Mazzaroth in their season, or can you guide the Bear with its children? Do you know the ordinances of the heavens? Can you establish their rule on the earth?”

If the earth, the sea, and the weather were not enough, God asks Job questions about outer space—the planets and constellations.

Charles Boyle, a brilliant thinker and devoted Christian, was fascinated with Johann Kepler’s and Isaac Newton’s discoveries about planetary motion and the intricate design of the universe. He hired a watchmaker to design an actual working model of the solar system that demonstrated the motion of the planets around the sun. They all moved according to the pattern of their orbit. It was an incredible display of skill and precision. On one occasion, Boyle was showing the model to an atheistic scientist, who was very impressed with the clockwork model. The atheist said, “This is a very impressive model. Who made it for you?” Boyle responded with a grin, “No one made it—it just happened.”

The instinct of the animals

39:1 - “Do you know when the mountain goats give birth? Do you observe the calving of the does?”

39:13-16 - “The wings of the ostrich wave proudly, but are they the pinions and plumage of love? For she leaves her eggs to the earth and lets them be warmed on the ground, forgetting that a foot may crush them and that the wild beast may trample them. She deals cruelly with her young, as if they were not hers.”

39:19 - “Do you give the horse his might? Do you clothe his neck with a mane?”

39:26-27 - “Is it by your understanding that the hawk soars and spreads his wings toward the south? Is it at your command that the eagle mounts up and makes his nest on high?”

Keep in mind all that Job has went through in his life. He’s lost his fortune, his health, and his children. And yet God wants to take him to the zoo? Is this really what this man needs in the midst of his pain?

The point of all these questions is this: If Job can't even explain the origin of the earth, the depth of the sea, the phenomena of the weather, the vastness of the universe, and the instinct of the animals, how could he ever fully understand the infinite wisdom of a sovereign God whose ways are much higher than his?

- The God who keeps the oceans in their proper place is faithful to respond to the needs of those made in His image.
- The God who maintains the universe, who arranges the planets in their orbits, and who numbers the stars is faithful to respond to the needs of those made in His image.
- The God who feeds the ravens of the valley when they cry out to Him is faithful to respond to the needs of those made in His image.

In His infinite wisdom, God knew that a show-and-tell of creation's magnificence would help settle the heart of a grieving man because it would elevate God to the place of supreme Creator and Sustainer, and Job could find security and hope in this precious truth.

2. God corrects Job's PERSPECTIVE on life (40-41)

"And the Lord said to Job: 'Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty? He who argues with God, let him answer it.' Then Job answered the Lord and said: 'Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer You? I lay my hand on my mouth. I have spoken once, and I will not answer; twice, but I will proceed no further.'"

God confronts Job's perception of life, and the second thing that He does in chapters 40-41 is to correct Job's perspective on life. What we often perceive shapes our perspective. If we wrongly perceive a world in which God is distant and remote, then our perspective will be that God is too far removed from our situation to care for us.

Perspective is not what we see but the way we see it.

Job's perspective on his situation was limited. He knew that he had not sinned against God, but believed that his suffering was unjustified. This led him to speculate that either God was unjust or that he had been forgotten. How does the Lord correct Job's perspective?

Job needed to be **reminded** of his own smallness

Job 40:1-5 - “Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty? He who argues with God, let him answer it. Then Job answered the Lord and said, Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer You? I lay my hand on my mouth. I have spoken once, and I will not answer twice, but I will proceed no further.”

He has no answers for the questions that the Lord has asked, and this reminds him of God’s infinite wisdom and his own finite smallness. When he says, “I lay my hand on my mouth,” Job is essentially saying that he was guilty of speaking without understanding.

Job needed to be **rebuked** for some of his assertions

Job 40:6-9 - “Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to Me. Will you even put Me in the wrong? Will you condemn Me that you may be in the right? Have you an arm like God, and can you thunder with a voice like His?”

God is saying to Job, “Who are you to accuse Me of injustice? Who are you to decide whether or not I am fair?”

Job needed to be **reassured** of God’s sovereign control

Job 40:10-14 - “Adorn yourself with majesty and dignity; clothe yourself with glory and splendor. Pour out the overflowings of your anger, and look on everyone who is proud and abase him. Look on everyone who is proud and bring him low and tread down the wicked where they stand. Hide them all in the dust together; bind their faces in the world below. Then will I also acknowledge to you that your own right hand can save you.”

God is the one who brings down the proud and meets out judgment on the wicked. Who is Job to question anything that God chooses to do? God is reassuring Job of God’s own sovereign power.

3. God comforts Job’s PAIN in life (42)

“Then Job answered the Lord and said, ‘I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted. ‘Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?’ Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. ‘Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you make it known to Me.’ I had heard of Your by the

hearing of the ear, but now my eyes see You; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

Listen to how Job responds to this revelation of God’s character:

- His affirmation of God’s truth—“I know You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours will ever be thwarted.”
- His awe of God’s glory—“I talked about what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me that I did not know.”
- His attention to God’s voice—“Hear now, and I will speak; I will ask You, and You instruct me.”
- His adoration of God’s person—“I have heard of You with my ears, but now my eyes see You for who You are.”
- His apology for his own pride—“Therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

Job says, “I thought I knew You before I entered this valley. But I had only heard with my ears—now I can see You with my eyes!”

There are some wonderful take-away’s from these chapters. When we are looking for answers and explanations, what Job learned can be passed along to us:

1. God’s ways are majestic—He’s greater than us!
2. God’s ways are mysterious—He’s wiser than us!
3. God’s ways are mighty—He’s stronger than us!

What glorious truth for us to ever keep in mind—If God designed us, He can deliver us from our sin! If God created the universe, He can control the universe and work all things together for our good and His own glory!

The amazing truth that we come away with as we study the story of Job is that when all is said and done, the solution to our brokenness is not an explanation, an answer, or some proposition. The solution is a Person—God Himself. And He is a great big God! This great big God has come to us in the person of Jesus Christ. He is God in human flesh, the very embodiment of

God's wisdom and power. On the cross, He suffered for our sins and rose again as our conquering King in whom we place our faith and have hope.

1 Peter 4:19 - "Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good."

Who have you entrusted your soul to?