

Job 38:1-11

Then the LORD responded to Job out of a violent storm. He said:

²Who is this who spreads darkness over my plans with his ignorant words?

³Get ready for action like a man!

Then I will ask you questions,
and you will inform me.

⁴Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?

Tell me, if you understand anything about it.

⁵Who determined its dimensions?

I am sure you know.

Who stretched out the surveying line over it?

⁶What supports its foundation?

Who set its cornerstone in place,

⁷when the morning stars sang loud songs together,
and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

⁸Who locked up the sea behind doors

when it burst out of the womb?

⁹When I clothed the sea with clouds,

when I wrapped it with thick darkness as its swaddling cloths,

¹⁰when I broke its power with my decree,

when I locked it up behind barred, double doors,

¹¹I said, “You may come this far, but no farther.

Here is the barrier for your proud waves.”

God Speaks

I.

It must have been very, very frustrating. He had been wanting to have a conversation—waiting for a dialogue. He had questions. Lots of questions. He wanted answers. It had gotten to the point where he was *demanding* some answers.

Many of you are familiar with the story of Job.

He had been a proud man—strong and successful. He was well-regarded in the community. He was a God-fearing man; he tried to be godly and upright in all his dealings with others—really, with *everything* he did.

Job didn’t know it, but he had been the subject of a discussion between God and Satan. Satan insisted that Job was only so God-fearing and righteous because he was successful and enjoyed so many blessings. In perhaps one of the stranger things mentioned in the Bible, God gave Satan permission to bring trouble on Job.

At first it was restricted to Job’s possessions and his family. One really horrific day changed everything. Servant after servant brought the reports of disaster. Job’s livestock was stolen and his children all died in a storm that came out of nowhere.

Job remained strong. His faith in God was unwavering. He said: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will return. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. May the name of the LORD be blessed” (Job 1:21, EHV).

Satan spoke to God again. If God would allow him to afflict Job’s health, *that* would be different. Job would surely reject God at that point. “The LORD said to Satan, ‘Very

well, then, he is in your hand, but preserve his life” (Job 2:6, EHV).

Sometimes when people evaluate all the problems they face they conclude: “But at least I have my health.” In an instant, health can be taken away. With his health gone, Job’s wife urged him to curse God for all his misfortune. Friends came by, ostensibly to console him, but ended up accusing him of concealing some great sin. God *must* be punishing him for *something* with all this trouble, they insisted.

Job maintained his innocence. To be sure, no human being is *perfect*, but Job had done nothing so much more egregious than anyone else to warrant this kind of retribution when no one else had to face anything like it.

As the friends sat with him for days on end having their discussion, Job maintained his faith. He didn’t blame God or deny that God cared for him. For a while.

Eventually, things changed. This had gone on long enough. The jabs from his friends and his wife were getting to him. He still continued to adamantly insist he was innocent. In the midst of his declarations of innocence, he began to demand answers. He had questions. Lots of questions. He wanted answers, and not from these know-it-all friends who were proving that they knew nothing, but from God.

II.

It is really easy to look at Bible history and the figures in the midst of it and wonder why they were so weak. They didn’t seem to really trust in the God they claimed to follow.

We read Bible history with an eye on the end of the story. The 42 chapters of the book of Job read a little bit like a novel. You can read the whole story in a short time.

Time passed between the loss of Job’s children and his wealth until, later, he also lost his health. When his friends came, “They caught sight of Job from a distance, they did not recognize him. They raised their voices and wept. Each man tore his robe and tossed dust into the air and onto his head. ¹³They sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights, but no one spoke a word to him because they saw that his suffering was very great.” (Job 2:12-13, EHV). For a whole *week* these so-called friends who had come to support him and console him just sat there. They must have looked as miserable as he felt with their torn clothing and their dusty hair as they just sat there, cross-legged, on the ground.

Think carefully back over your life. Things do not always go according to plan. There are challenges in life. Perhaps you have lost money in a bad investment. Maybe a marriage has ended badly. You might have had difficulties with neighbors or friends, or even family members. You may even have been one of those who said: “At least I have my health.” Maybe *that* has been taken away, too.

Why, Lord? Why *me*? Why do these bad things keep happening to me? Like Job, many of us—maybe *all* of us, at one time or another—have demanded answers from God. Job said: “Oh how I wish I had someone to listen to me! Look, here is my seal on my testimony. Let the Almighty answer me! Let me see the written indictment from my accuser” (Job 31:35, EHV). Give me some answers, God; I’ve waited long enough.

III.

“Then the LORD responded to Job out of a violent storm” (Job 38:1, EHV). Back where I come from, almost all the weather came from the west—northwest for the winter blizzards, southwest or due west for spring and summer storms. In the summer, we used stand out in the yard and watch. The clouds would boil. Distant rumbles of thunder assaulted the ears and flickers of lighting illuminated the sky. Shades of greens

and blues and purples in the clouds appear ominous. If you see weather like that, you tune in to your favorite news channel or open your most-used weather app to see what the chances are of severe weather.

There was no warning for Job. The violent storm hit without warning, more intense than any rogue wave on the open water.

“Who is this who spreads darkness over my plans with his ignorant words? ³Get ready for action like a man! Then I will ask you questions, and you will inform me” (Job 38:2-3, EHV).

What do you notice right away? God didn’t answer *any* of Job’s questions. There was no answer to the “Why me, Lord” questions. No explanation given. Not even a hint.

All Job’s fancy speeches defending himself are exposed by God as “ignorant words.” Job had presumed to know the mind of God. Job had presumed that *he* knew what was best, and seemed to insist that God follow *his* plans. God identifies Job’s presumption as “spreading darkness” over *God’s* plans.

God launched a barrage of questioning challenges at Job. “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you understand anything about it” (Job 38:4, EHV). First God puts his creation of the world in terms of a master builder. “Who determined its dimensions? I am sure you know. Who stretched out the surveying line over it? ⁶What supports its foundation? Who set its cornerstone in place, ⁷when the morning stars sang loud songs together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” (Job 38:5-7, EHV). Do you ever think of God being sarcastic? “I am sure you know,” he says to Job.

“Who locked up the sea behind doors when it burst out of the womb? ⁹When I clothed the sea with clouds, when I wrapped it with thick darkness as its swaddling cloths, ¹⁰when I broke its power with my decree, when I locked it up behind barred, double doors, ¹¹I said, ‘You may come this far, but no farther. Here is the barrier for your proud waves’” (Job 38:8-11, EHV). In the days of Job the sea was described as an enemy to be defeated. God pictures it as a newborn baby. He—God—was the midwife who delivered the sea. He clothed it with clouds and made sure it was safely confined in its crib—the shorelines that contain it.

In rapid-fire succession God uses still more pictures after our text. How much can Job—or we—understand of them? He illustrates the morning, the deepest parts of the sea, death, the vastness of the earth, all kinds of different weather, the constellations, and all kinds of different animals and their idiosyncracies.

People *presume* to know so much. Job, of course, lived thousands of years ago. We have a much greater knowledge of the natural world and the universe than he could ever hope to have had. But if there’s one thing we should have learned through all the decades of my life and from centuries of discovery before that, we have no idea how much we don’t know. Constantly the assumptions of the past are challenged by new discoveries.

God is so much wiser than any human being—than all the collective knowledge of humanity. God knew all these things and things that are yet to be discovered before he ever uttered “Let there be...” in creation. His power, his knowledge, his control.

IV.

But why? Why the challenge to Job? Why the sarcasm?

I certainly can’t presume to have all the answers. God didn’t give those answers to Job, either.

The challenging, sarcastic questions of God to Job serve to remind us how much *God* knows. Job didn't have the context to demand answers of God. He didn't know of Satan's request and God's permission. He didn't know the future plans God had for Job. He just didn't know.

You and I don't know. We don't know what is coming up in our future lives. We don't know why God has given us the challenges we face today; perhaps he is preparing us for something yet to come.

We *do* know what God has told us. *He* knows. All the challenges of health and wealth and relationships are well-known by him. *He* knows that the greatest problem is sin.

God has told us what he did about sin. Just as we cannot fully comprehend the intricacies of the universe, we cannot fully comprehend the salvation our Lord Jesus won for us. Human minds find it illogical that Jesus, God himself, became fully human yet remained God so that he could take all our sins on himself and sacrifice his life to pay for them on the cross. Human minds find it impossible that Jesus could rise from the dead on the third day, conquering death and sin and the devil for all time. We cannot comprehend that human beings cannot *choose* to believe this message of salvation, but that God the Holy Spirit works faith in our hearts so that we believe in him as our Savior.

After being confronted by God, Job answered: "I have made statements about things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know...⁵My ear heard about you. Now my eyes see you. ⁶So I despise myself. I repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:3, 5-6, EHV).

Sometimes it's frustrating when we don't get the answers we want. Repent, like Job. Come to the same understanding he did: God is still in control, no matter how unlikely it might seem.

Listen to God when he speaks. Listen without challenging. Just believe. He cares for you. He has already demonstrated his goodness to you. Trust in God rather than leaning on your own understanding. Amen.