

At last we come to the speeches of God. God's speech can be outlined as follows:

1. God challenges Job (38:1-3)
  - God's dominion over all creation in 38:4 - 40:2
    - A. inanimate nature (38:4-38)
    - B. animate nature (animals; 38:39 - 40:2)

Job answers (40:3-5).

2. God challenges Job (40:6-14)
  - Behemoth and Leviathan (40:15 - 41:34)

Job answers (42:1-6)

#### INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

In Job 28, the author of Job introduced the idea of the hidden wisdom of God. There he stated that only God knows the way to wisdom and its dwelling place. It belongs to Him and Him alone. This, of course, was not a speech that was heard by Job or his friends; however, it sets the reader up for chapters 38-41 where God challenges Job to consider his limited understanding of the world and the way it works.

In chapter 31 Job takes an oath declaring the sins he has not committed. Then in 31:35 he says, "Let the Almighty answer me!" In essence, Job is saying that if he could stand before God, he would declare that he has not committed any of these sins and he knows that he would never be found guilty. However, as far as Job can tell, this is the end of the story. He does not expect the Almighty to suddenly show up and answer him. He thinks he is about to die. Instead, Job is in for a surprise.

God's response to Job is not what he expected. Job "requested either a bill of indictment, with specific charges which he is prepared to answer, or else a verdict from the judge which he confidently expects to be a declaration of his innocence" (Anderson, 268). God's response to Job is not what the reader expects either. Many commentators are perplexed by God's answer. Instead of giving profound answers that describe why Job suffered, God seems to give him a lesson in natural history, talking about inanimate and animate creation. Worse than that, God seems to berate Job for being a mortal.

The problem is that many people expect the book to answer the question, "Why do the righteous suffer?" But instead, the question the book is answering is closer to Satan's challenge: "Will Job serve God for nothing?" To personalize it, the question for all of us is will we serve God if we aren't receiving something from Him? Is He a God that we should commit our lives to, simply because He is worthy of such commitment? The book is also answering a question related to the righteousness of God. With all the injustice in the world, how can God be good and powerful and wise and just? Why doesn't God do something about all of this evil and all of this suffering and corruption?

We are certainly going to be disappointed in God's speech if we come to it asking the wrong questions. In a nutshell, here is the question the Book of Job is asking: How does God address the problem of evil and why do we serve God?

Before we look at the text itself, it is important to notice that God never comes forward with a list of Job's sins (as Job's friends did), since that was never the issue. Job was not being punished for sin. We must also take note, however, that Job spoke hastily in the midst of his suffering and seemed to call into

question the justice of God. Job spoke as if God was ruling the world arbitrarily, without rhyme or reason. He had given up hope and wanted to die because he saw the working of God as chaotic, unordered, and unpredictable. Job is rebuked for that.

What is interesting in the speeches of God that follow is that God never explains to Job why He allowed him to suffer. God, the angels in the court in heaven, and we who read the book all know why Job was suffering, but from what we can tell, Job never knew why. Instead, God will make it clear that His wisdom is hidden from Job, and Job was out of place speculating about God's governing of the world's affairs. Our take away is that God is not obligated to answer our questions. He does not need to explain Himself. He does not have to give an account of His actions to us.

**38:1 Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said,**

**38:2 "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?**

**38:3 "Now gird up your loins like a man, and I will ask you, and you instruct Me!**

Job has been speaking a lot, but because he spoke without knowledge, his comments have darkened understanding about God. Job muddied the waters. He accused God of being arbitrary, without regard for justice, and assumed that he could dispute with God (see end note). Thus, God tells him to gird up his loins and answer some questions.

Warriors, laborers, or athletes would "gird up their loins. That is, they would take their robe and tuck it in their belt so that they could move freely. The idea behind the expression is "prepare yourself!"

Job wanted answers, instead he got questions. But the questions that God asks lead Job to the place he needs to be.

**38:4 "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding,**

**38:5 Who set its measurements? Since you know. Or who stretched the line on it?**

**38:6 "On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone,**

**38:7 When the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?**

God is the architect and the builder of the universe. Like a wise master builder, He measured the earth out to match His blueprints exactly. He sunk the foundational pillars so the earth would not totter, and set the cornerstone in place.

God will use creation to demonstrate that if Job cannot understand the way that God works in the natural world (which was visible to Job), how can he understand the hidden wisdom of God working to execute His plan?

The first question in verse 4 is related to the eternity of God and the finitude of Job: "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?"

No human existed when God first began His creative work. The angels (the morning stars) were there. They sang and shouted for joy as the world was born; humans, however, were nothing but a thought in the mind of God. "How presumptuous, therefore, it was in one so short-lived to sit in judgment on the doings of Him who had formed the world!" (Barnes).

Job spoke presumptuously - as if he understood the working of God. If he is so knowledgeable, then he should be able to tell God about the creation of the earth (38:4b).

Does mankind know the structure of the created order? Do we know how to mark out the dimensions of the world or how to lay its foundations and set its cornerstone in place? Even though we live in the world, we are ignorant of its formation. Our ignorance should cause us to think twice before we make accusations against God.

**38:8 "Or who enclosed the sea with doors When, bursting forth, it went out from the womb;  
38:9 When I made a cloud its garment and thick darkness its swaddling band,**

God gave birth to the oceans.

"This image is one of great beauty. It is that of the vast ocean just coming into being, with a cloud resting upon it and covering it (like a swaddling band). Thick darkness envelopes it, and it is swathed in mists" (Barnes).

On the second day of creation it says, "Then God said, 'Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.' God made the expanse, and separated the waters which were below the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse; and it was so."

**38:10 And I placed boundaries on it and set a bolt and doors,  
38:11 And I said, 'Thus far you shall come, but no farther; And here shall your proud waves stop '?**

In Genesis 1:9-10, on the third day of creation, God said, "Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear"; and it was so. God called the dry land earth, and the gathering of the waters He called seas; and God saw that it was good."

God divided the water from the dry land. He set impassable boundaries for the oceans.

God said to the sea, "Thus far you shall come, but no farther; And here shall your proud waves stop." As Barnes says, "The waves seem to advance in pride and self-confidence, as if nothing could stay them. They come as if exulting in the assurance that they will sweep everything away. In a moment they are arrested and broken, and they spread out humbly and harmlessly on the beach. God fixes the limit or boundary which they are not to pass, and they lie prostrate at His feet."

The sea in the ancient near eastern world was thought of as an abode of the dead, a hostile place to man. No one would venture on it without great risk. The seashore was the boundary that protected humanity from the furious power of the sea. God is the One who enclosed the sea that has been kept in place; the door has been shut and barred.

The sea may seem chaotic, uncontrollable, and dangerous to man, but God created it and He controls it.

**38:12 "Have you ever in your life commanded the morning, and caused the dawn to know its place,  
38:13 That it might take hold of the ends of the earth, And the wicked be shaken out of it?  
38:14 "It is changed like clay under the seal; And they stand forth like a garment.  
38:15 "From the wicked their light is withheld, And the uplifted arm is broken.**

Verses 12-15 show us the wisdom and power of God.

God uses a metaphor of clay to describe the coming of the dawn. In the ancient world people used clay to make seals -- for a scroll, for example. If someone wrote a scroll and wanted to identify it as theirs, they would get a lump of clay and put it on the scroll. Then they would use their personal seal to stamp the clay. One type of stamp is called a cylinder seal. As the name implies, it was a cylinder with a picture engraved in it that was rolled over the clay. On one side of the seal there was just formless clay, but as the seal was rolled on it, an image would appear. The metaphor here is describing dawn; the day begins like the rolling of a stamp over clay. Each morning starts off in darkness. Everything is shapeless. But then as the sun starts to rise, things appear and more and more details emerge until everything is beautifully



Cylinder Seal

displayed. "It is changed like clay under the seal." "Before, all was dark and undistinguished. Nature seemed to be one vast blank, with no prominent objects, and with no variety of color. When the light dawns on the earth, the various objects - hills, trees, houses, fields, and flowers seem to stand forth, or to raise themselves up, and to put on the appearance of gorgeous and variegated vestments. It is as if the earth were clothed with beauty, and what was at first, a vast blank is now arrayed in splendid vestments" (Barnes).

Job has already spoken of how the wicked love the darkness; how they do their deeds in the darkness; how they are people of darkness. "When the light shines upon the world, the wicked, accustomed to perform their deeds in the night, flee from it, and retreat to their dark hiding-places" (Barnes).

Men cannot command the dawn and dispel the darkness of the night. God can. He controls the darkness so that it does not have dominion over His creation.

**38:16 "Have you entered into the springs of the sea Or walked in the recesses of the deep?"**

**38:17 "Have the gates of death been revealed to you, Or have you seen the gates of deep darkness?"**

**38:18 "Have you understood the expanse of the earth? Tell Me, if you know all this.**

**38:19 "Where is the way to the dwelling of light? And darkness, where is its place,**

**38:20 That you may take it to its territory And that you may discern the paths to its home?"**

**38:21 "You know, for you were born then, And the number of your days is great!**

**38:22 "Have you entered the storehouses of the snow, Or have you seen the storehouses of the hail,**

**38:23 Which I have reserved for the time of distress, For the day of war and battle?"**

**38:24 "Where is the way that the light is divided, Or the east wind scattered on the earth?"**

**38:25 "Who has cleft a channel for the flood, Or a way for the thunderbolt,**

**38:26 To bring rain on a land without people, On a desert without a man in it,**

**38:27 To satisfy the waste and desolate land and to make the seeds of grass to sprout?"**

In verses 4-27 God is not just berating Job. Job had been speaking as if the world was lacking order and God didn't seem to be doing anything about it (see endnote for examples). However, God did not create chaos. God did not create a world in which rules don't apply, and everything is in an upheaval. Contrary

to what Job is thinking, God has everything under control. God's ways are not random or arbitrary. God is a God of order and a God of justice. Where there is nothing but chaos and formlessness, God brings in light and forms beauty. God made heaven and earth stable (38:6). The dawn comes reliably every day and drives out the darkness (38:12-14) because God made it that way.

Job 28 emphasized that man accomplishes great achievements but he cannot find wisdom. It is beyond his grasp. It cannot be found in the land of the living, nor in the depths of the sea. It cannot be purchased. It is hidden from the eyes of every living thing. Even death has only heard rumor of it. Now we understand the places where God has been in Job 38. The contrast is astonishing. The gap between God and man is immeasurable.

What is critical to see in these verses is that even the places that men in the ancient world feared and saw as chaotic are included in the list of places known to God – the recesses of the deep (the sea), the gates of death, and the deep darkness are all places that God has been (38:16-17). But more than that, God can manage all that exists in the natural world including those “chaotic” elements that are so threatening to man. The sea has boundaries set upon it (38:8), and even the floods that terrify man are channeled so that they bring water to the uninhabited parts of the earth, sustaining the life that is there (38:25-27). God is not only present in the uninhabited wastelands, He cares for the life that lives there (38:26, 27). The path of the thunderbolt is determined by God as well (38:25).

God knows that the world is complex and that there are wild “chaotic” elements that threaten mankind and life, nevertheless, He manages all of it (even the things that appear to be chaos) and from generation to generation; the earth abides, life abides, and people abide. We are not destroyed because God cares for us all. In short, God seems to be saying to Job, “The world may look chaotic to you, without any order to it or law governing it, but it is something I am managing every moment of every day. You cannot see or know enough to make the assumptions that you are making.”

**38:28 "Has the rain a father? Or who has begotten the drops of dew?"**

**38:29 "From whose womb has come the ice? And the frost of heaven, who has given it birth?"**

**38:30 "Water becomes hard like stone, And the surface of the deep is imprisoned."**

No man can produce rain at his pleasure.

No one among men can claim that he causes it, or can regard it as his offspring. The idea is, that the production of rain is among the proofs of the wisdom and agency of God, and that it is caused in a way that demonstrates his own agency. It is not by any power of man; and it is not in such a way as to constitute a relation like that between a father and a son. The rain is often appealed to in this book as something whose cause man could not explain, and as demonstrating the wisdom and supremacy of God. . . What caused it? Whence came the water which fell? How was it suspended? How was it borne from place to place? How was it made to descend in drops, and why was it not poured down at once in floods? (Barnes)

**38:31 "Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades, Or loose the cords of Orion?"**

**38:32 "Can you lead forth a constellation in its season, And guide the Bear with her satellites?"**

**38:33 "Do you know the ordinances of the heavens, Or fix their rule over the earth?"**

Can you keep Pleiades from wandering all over the sky? Or can you free Orion? Can you bring the seasons into existence, or guide the Bear (the constellation Ursa)? Do you know the laws by which the motions of the heavenly bodies are governed? Can you manage the universe?

Once again, these are all things that Job saw regularly, and things that he believed that God in His providence controlled and ruled over in His wisdom.

**38:34 "Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, So that an abundance of water will cover you?**

**38:35 "Can you send forth lightnings that they may go And say to you, 'Here we are'?"**

**38:36 "Who has put wisdom in the innermost being Or given understanding to the mind?"**

**38:37 "Who can count the clouds by wisdom, Or tip the water jars of the heavens,**

**38:38 When the dust hardens into a mass And the clods stick together?"**

Verse 36 has a number of interpretations,

It may be . . . that the reference is to the mind of Job in particular, and to the intelligence with which he was able to perceive, and in some measure to comprehend, these various phenomena. The connection may be something like this: "Look to the heavens, and contemplate these wonders. Explain them, if possible; and then ask who it is that has so endowed the mind of man that it can trace in them such proofs of the wisdom and power of the Almighty. The phenomena themselves, and the capacity to contemplate them, and to be instructed by them, are alike demonstrations of the supremacy of the Most High." (Barnes)

#### CONCLUSION:

From Job's perspective things were happening that shouldn't happen; namely, Job, a righteous man, was suffering. His conclusion was that God's rule of the world must be arbitrary and chaotic. However, God has shown Job that there are things that appear to be disorderly or chaotic that are really under His control. He will expand upon this in relation to animate creation in the verses that follow. God's wisdom rules over all – even the darkness, and the sea, and the places with savage and dangerous beasts. The world isn't out of control. Job may not understand, but even his sufferings are not beyond the sovereign control of God.

#### NOTE:

Job saw the world as arbitrary acts of God. Note a few verses below:

- Job 9:15-18 "Though I were innocent, I could not answer him; I could only plead with my Judge for mercy. 16 Even if I summoned him and he responded, I do not believe he would give me a hearing. 17 He would crush me with a storm and multiply my wounds for no reason. 18 He would not let me regain my breath but would overwhelm me with misery.

"The idea seems to be, that God acted toward him not as a judge determining matters by rule of law, but as a sovereign - determining them by his own will" (Barnes)

- Job 9:23-24 "When a scourge brings sudden death, he mocks the despair of the innocent. 24 When a land falls into the hands of the wicked, he blindfolds its judges. If it is not he, then who is it?"

Job sees God making no distinction between the righteous and the wicked. He seems to be inattentive to the innocent; He allows the righteous and the wicked to be swept away together. It is as if God had no concern for character. To illustrate this, Job says that the wicked are raised to places of power. They exercise a wide dominion over the earth, and the world is under their control. The judges have been blindfolded by God so there is no justice. If it is not God, then who is it that has done these things?

- Job 10:3 “Does it please you to oppress me, to spurn the work of your hands, while you smile on the schemes of the wicked?”
- Job 12:6 “The tents of marauders are undisturbed, and those who provoke God are secure-- those who carry their god in their hands.

Once again, it appears as if God does not thwart the wicked or lift up the righteous. God oppresses Job, a righteous man and He leaves marauders undisturbed.

- Job 19:7 "Though I cry, 'I've been wronged!' I get no response; though I call for help, there is no justice.

Though Job is totally innocent and calls for help, he gets no response. No matter what Job does, God treats him as guilty.

- Job 21:7-9 “Why do the wicked live on, growing old and increasing in power? 8 They see their children established around them, their offspring before their eyes. 9 Their homes are safe and free from fear; the rod of God is not upon them . . . 13 They spend their years in prosperity and go down to the grave in peace. 14 Yet they say to God, 'Leave us alone! We have no desire to know your ways. 15 Who is the Almighty, that we should serve him? What would we gain by praying to him?’

Job looks upon the wicked and he sees no evidence that God is punishing them. They live long. They have many children. Their livestock thrives and grows. They are rich. They celebrate, they dance, and they sing. Everything goes well for them and they look at God and say, “‘Leave us alone! We have no desire to know your ways. Who is the Almighty, that we should serve him? What would we gain by praying to him?’” Yet they thrive. If God is judge of all the earth and if God is the one who punishes those who refuse to turn to Him, where is the evidence of it?

- Job 23:13-14 "But he stands alone, and who can oppose him? He does whatever he pleases. 14 He carries out his decree against me, and many such plans he still has in store.

God does what He wants. It appears He has no reason behind His actions.

- Job 24:1-25 Job 24:1 “Why does the Almighty not set times for judgment? Why must those who know him look in vain for such days? 2 Men move boundary stones; they pasture flocks they have stolen. 3 They drive away the orphan's donkey and take the widow's ox in pledge. 4 They thrust the needy from the path and force all the poor of the land into hiding. 5 Like wild donkeys in the desert, the poor go about their labor of foraging food; the wasteland provides food for their children. 6 They gather fodder in the fields and glean in the vineyards of the wicked. 7 Lacking clothes, they spend the night naked; they have nothing to cover themselves in the cold. 8 They are drenched by mountain rains and hug the rocks for lack of shelter. 9 The

fatherless child is snatched from the breast; the infant of the poor is seized for a debt. 10 Lacking clothes, they go about naked; they carry the sheaves, but still go hungry. 11 They crush olives among the terraces; they tread the winepresses, yet suffer thirst. 12 The groans of the dying rise from the city, and the souls of the wounded cry out for help. But God charges no one with wrongdoing. . . . 25 "If this is not so, who can prove me false and reduce my words to nothing?"

There are numerous evils all around us. When is God going to do something? When is He going to set a time to judge the wicked?

In sum, Job had believed that the righteous would prosper and the wicked would suffer. But his suffering had caused him to conclude that the world was operating without any rules he could rely upon. What he expected from God he didn't see happening. Everything appeared chaotic and random; Job could see no consistency in the way that God treated people.

In God's speeches, God proves Job's conclusions are wrong.