

God answers Job (Chs. 38 – 41)

- “Out of the storm” the LORD (*Yahweh*) speaks to Job. This type of “theophany” (an appearance of God) in awesome natural phenomena also occurs with Moses & the Israelites at Mt. Sinai, and elsewhere in the OT.
- Immediately, the LORD challenges Job. He declares that in his questioning and complaint Job has spoken in ignorance. Now the LORD will question Job.
- God does not accuse Job of sin like Job’s friends did. God addresses Job something like a stern teacher would correct a student who has failed to understand an important lesson. God will use firmness, but also irony & humor, to lead Job to see things God’s way.
- God will interrogate Job in two speeches. The first speech focuses on God’s foundation & rule of the natural order. The second speech focuses on God’s rule of the moral order & his control over cosmic forces.

God answers Job

The LORD’s First Speech (38:2 – 40:5)

- Job had questioned God’s supervision of the universe. Now God hurls question after question at *him*, making Job realize how extremely limited is his own knowledge of the structure of the universe & the workings of nature.
- The LORD on the other hand has made the world according to his exact plans and governs it precisely according to his will.
- The LORD is persuading Job that he created & rules the world wisely and that Job’s suffering has not taken place outside God’s good governance.
- This first speech ends with the LORD answering with a forceful question that implies Job’s complaint risks becoming presumption & pride. Since Job has accused God, God demands an answer.

God answers Job

The LORD's First Speech (38:2 – 40:5)

- Job's steadfast defense of his own innocence & his complaint that God was treating him unjustly implied that God needed correction.
- Though he does not yet withdraw his previous complaint, Job's brief answer and his resolve to speak no further show he is willing to accept the correction that he imagined the Almighty needed.

God answers Job

The LORD's Second Speech (40:6 – 41:34)

- The Lord (*Yahweh*) begins his second speech by rebuking Job for coming perilously close to discrediting God's justice and his rule of the universe.
- The LORD does not accuse Job of sin, but he is pushing Job to give up his grievance and his headlong pursuit of self-justification. If Job continued on this course he would be guilty of putting himself above God.
- To stay Job from this course, the LORD challenges Job to take up the mantle as king of the universe and crush the wicked himself. If Job can do that, God will praise Job for being able to save himself (40:9-14).

God answers Job

The LORD's Second Speech (40:6– 41:34)

- The remainder of the second speech is taken up by lengthy, detailed descriptions of two great creatures, “behemoth” & “leviathan.”
- The description of these creatures combines realistic detail with mythological references to fashion ferocious & (humanly) uncontrollable monsters.
- These creatures are symbols that represent any creature or force, natural or spiritual, that asserts itself against God.
- God’s effortless control of these creatures is an “ancient way of affirming that Yahweh is the Master of whatever force might lie behind Job’s ordeal” (Hartley).

Job Repents (42:1-6)

- Job does not confess any sin, but he changes his mind about God’s justice & acknowledges that God is in complete control of his creation and that he rules in wisdom.
- He realizes that he has spoken in ignorance & from his severe human limitations. In effect, he confesses “that his God had been too small” (Alden).
- Before he had heard about God from received tradition & community ritual & celebration. This had nurtured his faith and fed his zeal.
- Now that he has “seen” God, he confesses his own unworthiness and gains a newer, deepened relationship with God.

Epilogue: Job is Restored (42:7-16)

- The Lord condemns the friends for speaking falsely and commends Job for speaking rightly.
- Job has received what he earnestly sought for, not blessing or reward, but the restoration of his relationship with God and the knowledge of God's presence in his life. Because of this, he willingly prays for the forgiveness of his friends, who had treated him so badly.
- The restoration and doubling of Job's fortune & family is God's free gift and not a reward for bearing his suffering.
- Job's restoration is necessary to the story because it shows that the "fear of Yahweh leads to an abundant life" (Hartley). The book of Job has already shown us that this abundance is about a relationship with God & not a *quid pro quo* blessing of health & wealth.

A Few Conclusions

The Lord does not explain himself to Job and the book of Job offers no intellectual "theodicy." Job is meant to help struggling believers, not persuade skeptics or the unconverted.

The most important thing in life is our relationship to God. The fear of God—humility and faith—is the proper stance toward God.

As Job suffered not because he sinned but because he was upright, so those who seek to follow Christ faithfully will suffer persecution (John 15:20; 2 Tim. 3:12).

We can trust that the world, human history and our individual lives all happen within the framework of God's wise, just, and compassionate plan.

We can suffer faithfully if we know God is with us and our suffering does not escape his attention or his care.

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