

Hope For The Hard Times Part 9

After a break we are back to our study of the book of Job and looking to find hope for the hard times. We have looked at the various accusations of Job's friends and Job's questions and now we are coming to the end of the book. Job has expressed his feelings of abandonment, feeling as if God has forgotten him (19:7). The unfairness of it all is overwhelming to Job. Listen to his words from Job 30:20-31.

Job recognizes God as his judge (9:15) but he seems to question his justice (27:2 he refers to God as the one who has denied him justice.) Here is the question that we've come to: **Is God qualified to rule Job's life?** And even more basic than that, fundamentally we can ask, **Is God qualified to rule the universe?** The Creator is being challenged by his creation. Job contends that he is right and righteous and he has a bone to pick with God so he wants to put God on the witness stand to cross examine him. Finally, God breaks his silence. For the first time God marches in and instead of answering Job's questions, God puts Job on the witness stand and begins to question him.

What follows is the longest conversation recorded in the Bible in which God speaks. God begins to ask Job questions – around seventy questions. Let's look at God's examination of Job. Turn to Job 38.

“Then the Lord answered Job out of the storm. He said: ‘Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me.’” Job 38:1-3 I would have to say, “that doesn't sound good to me.” Get ready Job. You better hang on. You and your friends have had a lot to say and now God has a few questions for you to think about.

Who Made the Earth? (38:4-7)

God begins Job's examination by asking about the earth. **“Where were you when I laid the earth's foundations?”** God is pictured as the architect and builder, marking off its dimensions, stretching a measuring line across it, setting the footings, laying the cornerstone. How do you respond to a question like that from God?

God's question exposes Job's ignorance and lack of understanding. “Job, since you weren't there at the beginning, since you don't understand how I created the world and how I ordained its function, how can you pretend to understand how the invisible world, the spiritual

world functions? If you can't explain creation and how the earth is laid out, how can you explain God and how God deals with his creation, including how I deal with you? You just don't have enough understanding or knowledge."

Who Set Limits for the Sea? (38:8-11)

Next God asks Job about the sea. Who fixed limits for it and said "this far you may come and no farther; here is where your proud waves halt?"(v11) The passage points to God as birthing the seas and setting limits for them. God makes the point to Job that since God has established the limits of the sea and the sea knows its place, it knows to go only so far and then no farther, maybe God set a limit for a man as well. Shouldn't a man know his place as the sea knows its place? Shouldn't man know his limits, to not go beyond what God has ordained and set for him? God asks, but Job has no answer.

Who Commands the Sun? (38:12-15)

Third, God asks Job about the dawn. "Have you ever created a sun rise Job? Have you ever commanded the sun to rise. If you can't command the sun, what makes you think you could command God?" The rising of the sun exposes the earth and its detail, details beyond what Job understands. The sun also exposes the darkened places, just as God's light exposes the darkness of a man's heart. Can you give orders to the morning Job or can you shine light into the darkness of your own heart and mind? Still no response from Job.

Have You Explored the Underworld? (38:16-17)

Fourth, God begins to ask Job about the underworld, both that world under the sea and the place of the dead. "Have you been there Job? Do you have an understanding of the deep recesses of the earth? Have you seen the gates of the shadow of death?" (V17) If not, if those simple things are a mystery to you, then how can you expect to understand the deep things I am working out in your life in a spiritual sense. If you can't understand the mysterious things of the physical world, how can you be expected to understand the mysterious things of the invisible spiritual world. How can you expect to understand the mystery of life and death?

Who Orders the Light? (38:19-21)

Fifth, God asks Job about the sun. "Do you know where the sun goes when it sets or where the darkness goes when it gives way to the light? Who flips the on and off switch Job? You ought to know since you were already born when I created the sun. You've been around

forever, just like me haven't you Job?"(v21) You have to love God's sarcasm in this.

Who Sends Snow and Hail? (38:22-24)

Sixth, God asks Job about the weather. "Do you know where the snow comes from, where it is created? What about the hail that I cause to fall? Or what about the lightning and the place where the wind originates? Come on Job, you have all the answers don't you?" If Job couldn't explain the workings of nature, how could he possibly explain the workings of God's providence in the lives of his people. Job remains silent.

Who Sends the Rain and the Lightning? (38:25-28)

Seventh, God asks Job about the rain, the lightning, and the floods that come. "Job do you think you could handle arranging the rain for all of the places on the earth? Do you have an understanding as to why the rain falls to water flowers in the desert that no man will ever even see? If you don't understand the full scope of things, if you don't see the big picture of life on this earth, then how can you question God's judgment over the earth?"

Where Does Ice Come From? (38:29-30)

Eighth, God asks Job about ice. "Where does ice come from Job? Do you understand about setting the temperature so that frost comes and the ponds and lakes freeze over? If you don't understand these basic things, how can you be expected to understand the ways of God with men and women? How can you understand the human heart that hardens and thaws under God's hand?"

Who Directs the Planets? (38:31-33)

Ninth, God asks Job about the planets. "Job, do you know the laws of the heavens? Can you set up God's dominion over the earth?" If you don't know the laws that govern the heavens, what makes you think you have an understanding of the laws that govern the spiritual world and your life?

Who Forms the Clouds? (38:34-38)

Finally, God asks Job about the clouds over head. The point is that God controls all of nature and only God can control it. Was it Will Rogers that said something about "everyone complains about the weather but no one does anything about it." Only God can do something about the weather. Only God can command nature's storms to come according to his purpose and only God can command the storms of life to come, also according to his purpose as well. He

tips over the water jars of the heavens when the dust becomes hard and I believe he tips them over when our hearts and lives become hardened as well.

God has had plenty of questions and so far, Job has flunked the test. He hasn't had a single answer. And before he can raise any protest, God starts in again. "Job, since you didn't do too well on the first series of questions, lets try a new category."

Who Feeds the Lions? (38:39-40)

First, God asks Job about the lion. "Do you provide for the lions? Do you send them prey for food, do you take care of the hungry lion cubs?" No, but God takes care of them. His eye is on the sparrow and the lion. God is taking care of all of his creation. If God can take care of all the animals, he can take care of Job as well.

Who Feeds the Ravens? (38:41)

Second, God asks Job about the raven (v41). Again, who provides food for the raven? There is a divine order in all of this. The ravens would feast on the carcasses left behind by the lions. God runs the animal kingdom with a precise order. Everything happens according to his divine plan and purpose. If it happens that way in the animal kingdom, we can expect it to happen by his divine purpose and plan in our lives as well. The God who feeds the birds of the air is going to take care of his children.

Who Delivers the Goats and Deer? (39:1-4)

"Okay Job, what do you know about the gestation period for goats and about the birthing process for the deer? Do you know how this all works, Job? Do you know the time when they give birth. Do you know how the mothers know to wean their young and send them off on their own? Do you understand the timing on all of this, Job? If you don't understand the timing and the season in all of this, then how can you be expected to understand the season you are going through right now? You are going through a season of testing, like the deer goes through a season of labor pain, but I will bring her and you through this season. You don't know enough to understand my timing. Just like the goat and the deer are delivered at the right time and season, Job you will be delivered as well, in just the right time."

Who Made the Wild Donkey? (39:5-8)

God asks Job about the wild donkey. Notice the donkey "laughs at the commotion in the town; he does not hear a driver's shout. He ranges the hills for his pasture and searches for any

green thing.”(v7-8) The wild donkey knows where he belongs. It is not in the city but he searches the hills for his pasture. The donkey knew where he belonged, why is it Job and his friends can’t figure out where they belong and stay in the right place?

Who Made the Ox Wild? (39:9-12)

Sixth, God asks Job about the wild ox. It is interesting that God inquires about Job trusting the wild ox. “Will you rely on him for his great strength? Will you leave your heavy work to him? Can you trust him to bring in your grain and gather it to your threshing floor?” Job was willing to trust a wild ox to accomplish all of this work and thus provide income for Job. But Job really had no control over that ox if God hadn’t ordained it. And why would he trust in that animal, but not trust in God? God is the one who created the ox. Why not put your full and complete trust in God the Creator rather than in the creature?

Who Made the Ostrich so Strange? (39:13-18)

God asks Job about the ostrich. Such a strange bird, yet God had a reason for making the Ostrich. And when she runs, she outruns the horse and rider. There are plenty of things in the animal kingdom you won’t be able to understand Job, but the God who created the ostrich is the God who created you as well. There will be plenty of things in the spiritual kingdom, in life, that will seem strange and mysterious to you, but you can trust the God who is Creator and Lord over all. Trust him and trust his master plan.

Who Made the Horse so Courageous? (39:19-25)

God asks Job about the horse, so courageous in battle. Who made him that way? Who put that instinct into a horse to run to the battle? Job, did you do it? Do you understand where that courage comes from? No answer?

Who Made the Hawk Soar? (39:26)

God asks Job about the hawk. Is it your wisdom that caused the hawk to soar the way he does? Are you responsible for his gracefulness as he soars in the air, gliding on the wind? Oh, you had nothing to do with that? I thought you understood it all Job. I thought you had all wisdom. You had it all figured out.

Who Made the Eagle Nest on High? (39:27-30)

God asks Job finally about the eagle. “Who taught the eagle to soar and to build his nest so high up on the side of the cliff? Who gave the eagle such sharp eyesight that he could spot his

prey from so far away? Job were you responsible for any of this? Do you have insight into any of this? Do you have understanding of any of the things I've asked about?"

Job sits in silence. He has no answers to any of this. He has to be feeling pretty sheepish. He has had all of these questions, all of these things he was going to say to God if God would just show up. And then God showed up and Job has nothing to say. No response.

"Come on Job, I'm waiting." God kind of pushes him. **"Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him? Let him who accuses God answer him!" Job 40:2** Come on Job. Do you have enough wisdom to correct me? Have I been wrong on any of these questions? Pick a subject Job. You've been accusing me, now speak up.

And Job answers the Lord, **"I am unworthy – how can I reply to you? I put my hand over my mouth. I spoke once, but I have no answer – twice, but I will say no more."** Job 40:4-5.

Job realizes he has no right to answer, to even open his mouth. He is unworthy. Job knows he is outclassed, but he still hasn't repented of some of that arrogance and self-righteousness that had taken over in him, so God says, "I've got a few more questions for you Job."

"Would you discredit my justice? Would you condemn me to justify yourself?" Job 40:8 This is God asking Job and talk about strong words of accusation. Is this what Job has been doing? Has Job come to believe that he is more right and righteous than God? That he is suffering for no reason and surely God must have some kind of evil motive behind it all. Make God a sinner so he can be a saint? This is what much of the post-modern world is doing.

So God says, "Come on Job. If you think you can handle it, why don't you come rule on my throne for awhile? If you think you are as righteous as God and as wise as God, then come on and give it your best shot."

And then with even more sarcasm that before, God begins to talk to Job. **"Do you have an arm like God's and can your voice thunder like his? Then adorn yourself with glory and splendor and clothe yourself in honor and majesty. Unleash the fury of your wrath, look at every proud man and bring him low...crush the wicked where they stand. Bury them all in the dust together; shroud their faces in the grave. Then I myself will admit to you that your own right hand can save you."** Job 39:11-14.

What's it gonna be Job? Are you wise enough, strong enough, righteous enough, to run things and tell God what to do? If you can run things, then God himself will admit that you can save yourself.

God asks Job about the behemoth and the leviathan (perhaps the hippo or elephant and the whale or crocodile). Notice God says, **“No one is fierce enough to rouse him. Who then is able to stand against me?” Job 41:10** And here is Job, standing before God, but realizing he is unable to stand before God, and without an answer. He used to think he had it all figured out, thinking God owed him something, an answer, a settlement, damages... but after this little interrogation by God, Job has a brand new revelation about himself and God. God has taught Job a powerfully important lesson, God is sovereign. He created all that exists and he has the right to do with his creation whatever is according to his divine plan and purpose. His ways are above our ways. His thoughts are above our thoughts. He is righteous and just according to his own righteousness and justice and he owes no one an explanation. After all of this, in one sense we come to this conclusion:

He is God. We aren't. End of story. Any other questions?

Job has gone through all of this questioning to have this point driven home. He does not know why all of these things happened to him, but he doesn't have to know why, he only has to know God! **You don't have to know why, you just need to know Who!**

Job is silent before the Almighty God. There is a divine plan, purpose and order to all that exists. He has just made that plain to Job. And Job cannot figure it all out. He can't grasp it all. We are finite and God is infinite. But we are certain of God's sovereign power and control over all things. He is in control and we can rest in that. We won't understand it all, but God is in control and that offers us hope. That brings us peace in the midst of confusion and hope for the hard times. There is a God and he is still in control. He rules over all of this universe and that means he also rules over me and my life and the circumstances I encounter.

I may not have all the answers, I may not understand the why in life, but all I really need to know is Who and that I know Him through Jesus Christ. I know him in his mercy!

Job has to be thinking “You are God and I'm not. But I know you. I've discovered you. I've come to know you as never before, to see you as never before. I see you in your splendor and power, but also I see you in your mercy, in your pardon, in your forgiveness, in your grace” And in that, Job finds hope for the hard times and redemption for his soul.