



The Day of Battle and War - Job Part 7

Job 38-40

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We are picking up in Job 38 today.

Job's life, that once was happy and full and rich and righteous, has been blasted with unbelievable loss and suffering. What once seemed like a good and happy world under a good and just God now seemed like a chaotic and senseless world, and Job became suspicious that God was running his universe poorly and even cruelly.

He thought that God doesn't care, isn't involved, and makes our lives miserable for sport.¹

So Job, in a dialogue with his friends, pours out his complaints about God. He tells it like he is feeling it: God seems to be hunting him, shooting his arrows at him², and even if he could speak to God, God would just bully him and bowl him over and hit him some more, he thinks.

Job believed in God's existence, but no longer trusted Him, and no longer had any real relationship with him like he thought he did before.

And, Job, as he suffers, says some things about God that he later regrets (Job 42:6). But he never gives up on God, he never gives up his pursuit of God. He says, in effect, "This is not how things should be if God is good" and keeps clinging to God.

He never says, "The world is chaotic, there is no God over it, so why should I expect anything differently." He continues to contend for faith,³ even though he is being coached to curse God and die.

So Job's story is instructive for us when we're suffering and can't explain it: for all the foolish things we might think, even sinful things, for all the ways we might even sin in our pain, we are called to hold on to God, seek our relationship with Him when He doesn't make sense, and wait for Him. He's merciful and kind and forgives us as we confess

¹ Ortlund, Eric. Piercing Leviathan (Downer's Grove: Intervarsity, 2021). Page 64.

² Job 6:4

³ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/themelios/article/five-truths-for-sufferers-from-the-book-of-job/>

those sinful things we said or thought or even prayed to Him. But he wants us to keep clinging to Him - He does know what He's doing, and in the end we will not be disappointed, though we may be angry at His ways right now.

And the words that God speaks at the end of Job are some of the ingredients that God mixes into our thoughts to help us persevere in the faith.

And not only was God not a bully, but was kind. God's response to Job is stern, for sure, He doesn't let Job get away with incorrect thinking, He reminds Job of his smallness and ignorance of how the world works and gently puts Job in his place. But he also draws Job in, questions him, answers him like a friend, and points to some real answers for his questions about God's goodness. God, who didn't have to answer Job, did answer Job.

And by extension He answers us.

Because the temptation for us in our despair is to start to see God's world the same way Job saw it: it is a chaotic senseless mess. God is arbitrary.

And sometimes the false promises that Christians gave us can make that problem worse. If we believed that if we followed the rules or followed the system, things would be guaranteed to go well for us, then when they don't, we can feel like God isn't governing the world well if He is governing it at all.

For example: perhaps we believed that if we **parented** a certain way our kids would turn out great. And there is biblical wisdom for parenting that often bears good fruit. But sometimes it doesn't. And it's easy to think, "God doesn't run the world the right way because the system didn't work."

Or we thought that if we honored God with how we **dated** (or didn't date) that our marriage would be stellar. And again, there are commands from God for purity, wisdom from God for how to honor Him in relationships, and often, following them bears good fruit because the God who made the instructions made the world, He knows how it usually works. But sometimes we do things right, and the outcome isn't what we expected. And we can think, "God is cruel, He is senseless and unjust, he doesn't reward the good and punish the bad, it's all just arbitrary." And we can get a little disillusioned. Or a lot disillusioned.

Or we followed biblical wisdom for **managing money**. We were cautious about debt, we were responsible and hard working. And that often makes things go better for us financially. But sometimes there are job losses and car crashes and lawsuits and roof leaks and health problems that mean that no matter how responsible we were, no matter how many cash envelopes we stuffed and debt snowballs we rolled, we end up in bad shape. And it can be so frustrating that we think God just doesn't run the world the right way. (Or maybe I'm cursed - His ways work, but not for me.)

And within the bible there's a huge body of wisdom literature. There are books like Proverbs that tell us, "This is wisdom - this is the way the world works. Follow wisdom and things will work out." And there are good ways prescribed for us that often bear good fruit, and we'll spend a lot of time soaking in that kind of wisdom in Proverbs this summer.

But there's also wisdom literature like Ecclesiastes and Job that tell us, "But they don't always work out, even if you follow wisdom." Sin twisted and wracked creation - it's like a car that got in an accident and got repaired, but was never right after that. The doors don't close right, there are weird noises, it's bent and just never right again. You can tell what it is supposed to be like, and sometimes it works, but it isn't what it should be.

And in those times when wisdom doesn't seem to work, when following God doesn't work out (as far as results go) and God's ways don't make sense. We might think that the way He rules isn't good, or that Christianity isn't valid. And we might check out on God and walk away from the faith altogether because we don't know if He can be trusted.

So God's answers to Job are good answers to us, even though our suffering is smaller.

And we started looking at God's first speech to Job in Job 38. And some of the elements we observed there to remember in our suffering and that can help us keep clinging to God when we're not sure if we trust Him anymore are:

- 1) **God is kinder than we expect or deserve** (God speaks to Job like Job's friends spoke to Job)
- 2) **God Is Attentive to His Creation as the Good Creator** (God reminds Job of how much wisdom and care must go into making and sustaining everything by taking him on tour of creation - from the constellations (Job 38:31) to the clumps of dust that stick together after it rains (Job 38:38).
- 3) **God is Far Above Us and Can Comprehend What We Cannot, so we Aren't In a Position to Be His Judge.** These chapters are all about His superior power,

wisdom, understanding, eternity.

- 4) **Chaos and Evil Are Allowed for a Time, But Are Limited by God.** God confines the sea, tells the waves where to stop. God's plan is that there is chaos and evil in creation, and it isn't all neatly judged and eliminated yet, but it is restrained. And it isn't the sum of creation, it isn't the sum of your story:

- 5) **There Is Still a Lot of Good in God's Creation** - God shows Job the beauty and the good that he hasn't been seeing because he is understandably consumed with his problem. (And this isn't a point the book of Job directly makes, but going out into creation, and taking in the beauty and the grandeur is a helpful reminder of God's goodness, and our smallness. Sometimes a walk in the woods or a day at the ocean can reset some of our self-focus, as God has revealed a lot about Himself in creation.)

- 6) **God limits not only evil, but evil people** - They have night when they can do damage, but every day He order the morning to get going and press pause on it for another day.

So we will pick up in chapter 38 - there are definitely parts of this that we're skipping because of the length of all of it. But God is walking Job through his creation to show him His care, the order, His plan, His goodness, His continued rule over all things- God's world is not what Job has come to believe it is, and God is not who Job came to believe He is.

Job 38:22–30

[22] **“Have you entered the storehouses of the snow,
or have you seen the storehouses of the hail,**

[23] **which I have reserved for the time of trouble,
for the day of battle and war?**

[24] **What is the way to the place where the light is distributed,
or where the east wind is scattered upon the earth?**

[25] **“Who has cleft a channel for the torrents of rain
and a way for the thunderbolt,**

[26] to bring rain on a land where no man is,
on the desert in which there is no man,
[27] to satisfy the waste and desolate land,
and to make the ground sprout with grass?
[28] “Has the rain a father,
or who has begotten the drops of dew?
[29] From whose womb did the ice come forth,
and who has given birth to the frost of heaven?
[30] The waters become hard like stone,
and the face of the deep is frozen.

Note on Genre:

One brief note on the biblical genre here. You may read through this and say, “This is just ancient nonsense. Haven’t we moved beyond this? Don’t we all know now that there is no storehouse for snow? Don’t we understand weather better than this now? We know there’s no womb for ice, and nobody gives birth to frost. The Bible is a bunch of ancient nonsense.

It’s important as we read through the bible to recognize the genre of the text we are reading, because that affects how we interpret it and affects the meaning.

What I mean by that is there are different types of writing, and the type of writing that it is affects the meaning. In the Bible there is historical narrative, poetry, letters, spooky apocalyptic texts, and the type of writing affects what the writing means.

One author explains this by saying that in the newspaper there are multiple genres - including classified ads and scientific articles. And if the headline in a classified ad reads “Steel Sinks,” we interpret that to mean that somebody is selling stainless steel sinks. If the headline on a scientific article is “Steel sinks,” we know it’s saying something else entirely.⁴

And the book of Job has several genres within it in different parts, but this part is clearly poetry. And you read poetry differently than you read a science text book.

There’s a big difference between a poem about roses and a book on botany.⁵ Both can be good, but they serve different purposes, and we interpret them differently. A poem

⁴ Cracking Old Testament Codes by Sandy and Giese, (p. 1). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

⁵ This is not an original thought, but I have been unable to track down where I heard it put this way.

aims to convey a feeling and is less concerned with scientific accuracy. Where a botany book is analyzing and not concerned at all with how you feel about a rose. Nobody reads a book on Botany to be moved emotionally, and nobody looks up poems on roses for gardening tips.

So how we interpret passages of the bible is affected by what type of writing it is.

And it says something about the vastness of God that all of these different forms of literature are used to describe Him. He didn't inspire the bible just as a list of propositions and truth claims, but as historical narratives, and poems, and wise sayings, and songs, and letters, and eye-witness accounts, and prophetic warnings, and apocalyptic literature. If the universe can't contain Him, our words surely can't, and so God uses all kinds of human language and forms to help us understand a little bit of his magnificence.

And the forms themselves are part of the meaning.

Now this idea can be misused - we start calling any part of the Bible we want "poetry" so that we don't have to take it literally. But that's just dishonest. There's nothing poetic about the accounts of Jesus rising from the dead, they are written like historical narratives, not poems, not parables, they are written as history and should be taken that way. Just because an event that is described seems miraculous or unbelievable doesn't give us grounds for saying "this must not be literal."

But we don't have to read about the storehouse for snow and take it literally. It's a poetic line couched in a poem, conveying a feeling and a meaning that doesn't pretend to describe a literal place.

So there is no storehouse for snow up in the sky somewhere. But the Bible is true, every word inspired by God. This is true like poetry is true.

And we could either dismiss the Bible because we know there's no literal storehouse for snow, which would be unwarranted because it isn't making a scientific claim here. Or, we could spend a lot of time trying to somehow defend the existence of a literal storehouse of snow because we think a wooden literal interpretation applies to every text, that every type of writing is to be interpreted like a book on Botany. But we'd miss what this is saying:

Job 38:22–33

[22] "Have you entered the storehouses of the snow,
or have you seen the storehouses of the hail,
[23] which I have reserved for the time of trouble,
for the day of battle and war?"

So God, in answering Job's complaint that the world isn't run right, says poetically that there is a storehouse for snow and hail, where it is being saved for a day of battle and war.

So somehow, God preparing for a day of battle and war is part of his answer to Job's complaint. Hail here is not just a natural occurrence, but some kind of ammo stored up.

And it wasn't uncommon in the Bible for God to use hail as part of his judgment on evil enemies. We saw it in Egypt as the plague of hail was used as His judgment. We see it in passages like:

Isaiah 30:30–31 [30] And the LORD will cause his majestic voice to be heard and the descending blow of his arm to be seen, in furious anger and a flame of devouring fire, with a cloudburst and storm and hailstones. [31] The Assyrians will be terror-stricken at the voice of the LORD, when he strikes with his rod.

So hail being stored for a day of battle and war is not a scientific statement about a big hail silo on a cloud somewhere, it is a poetic statement where God describes Himself as preparing for the judgment of evil.

Which tells us more about how we can think about God as we suffer and its senseless and seems endless:

God isn't absent, He isn't passive against evil. He is allowing and constraining evil within His creation for now, but is storing up the hail for a day when He will go to war and finally conquer evil.

And this symbolism is actually all over God's speeches here. The symbolism of God preparing for battle, of God speaking from a storm.

And at the beginning of this speech (and God's second speech to come)

Job 38:1 "Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said..."

Job 40:6 "Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said:"

God is answering out of the storm. And again, 12 years ago when I last preached through Job, I thought that the thunderings and lightnings were just a display of God's power, meant to put Job in his place and remind him of his smallness.

Job is a faultfinder and complainer and he needed to stop complaining, so God scared him with a storm, took him on this tour of the cosmos, and thundered at him to remind him of who is in charge, who has all power and knowledge, and to cause him to be quiet.

Impressing Job again with His power is part of what God is doing here, but certainly not all of it.

God is kindly, though he doesn't have to, answering Job's complaints specifically.

Job had complained that there is no limit on evil and evil people.

And the hail and the storm are part of God's answer.

This "God speaking from the storm" motif is all over the Bible, and it's often saying that God is preparing to finally defeat His enemies and bring something new in the wake of the battle. Just like a storm is destructive but then followed by new life and something green growing, God is preparing for destruction of his enemies followed by a newness of life.

I'll show you this motif a couple of places:

Jeremiah 23:16-20 "16 Thus says the Lord of hosts: "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes. They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord. 17 They say continually to those who despise the word of the Lord, 'It shall be well with you'; and to everyone who stubbornly follows his own heart, they say, 'No disaster shall come upon you.'"

18 For who among them has stood in the council of the Lord

to see and to hear his word,

or who has paid attention to his word and listened?

19 Behold, the storm of the Lord!

Wrath has gone forth,

a whirling tempest;

it will burst upon the head of the wicked.

20 The anger of the Lord will not turn back

until he has executed and accomplished

the intents of his heart.

In the latter days you will understand it clearly.

So notice the storm of the Lord is ready to burst in wrath on His enemies.

Nahum 1:2–3

[2] The LORD is a jealous and avenging God;

the LORD is avenging and wrathful;

the LORD takes vengeance on his adversaries

and keeps wrath for his enemies.

[3] The LORD is slow to anger and great in power,

and the LORD will by no means clear the guilty.

His way is in whirlwind and storm,

and the clouds are the dust of his feet.

Zechariah 9:14-15 “Then the Lord will appear over them,

and his arrow will go forth like lightning;

the Lord God will sound the trumpet

and will march forth in the whirlwinds of the south.

15 The Lord of hosts will protect them...

The same pattern of God judging enemies from the storm, rescuing His people with the storm in Psalm 18, Psalm 29, Psalm 74, Isaiah 27, Joel 3, Habakkuk 3. There's this image that God keeps painting for his people of God appearing in the storm to go to war for his people and against evil and chaos.

Remember that Job said that God was in a storm going to war with him:

Job 9:16-18 “If I summoned him and he answered me,

I would not believe that he was listening to my voice.

17 For he crushes me with a tempest

and multiplies my wounds without cause;

18 he will not let me get my breath,

but fills me with bitterness.

But in Job 38, God answers Job like a friend from the storm. He doesn't crush Job with the storm, He is in the storm, preparing to one day go to war to defeat His enemies.⁶

So what do we learn here about our suffering?

7) God isn't passive or indifferent toward evil in the world

8) The story isn't over yet: God will one day defeat evil

Sometimes when we're suffering, we can feel that our bad situation is the end of the story: I have a terminal disease and I will die, and that will define my story. I've experienced a life-altering crisis, and that is who I am now and my life is ruined. My family problem is now looking to be permanent, it consumes my thoughts, and this is all my life will be.

But we have to remember there is more to come in all of our stories. God is storing up the hail, as it were, He is preparing for a day when He will put an end to chaos, disease, sin, and suffering. Evil people will be punished. He will end evil, and just like the land turns green in the weeks after a big rainstorm, in the wake of that judgment, new life will come. The best part of all of our stories is yet to be told.

God is telling a story with history. And this is why evil is present (at least its a partial answer for why evil is present.) A story with no obstacle to overcome, no enemy, no antagonist, is a terrible story. The kids going to narnia and making snow angels isn't a good story. But overcoming a white witch because of the power of a good and not-tame lion is a great story. So God is telling a story that we're all in, and there are antagonists everywhere, but in the end, He will triumph, true good will win, the enemies will be defeated, suffering will end, and it will all end up in his glory and in our good.

We may look at our lives now and think they're ruined by what we're going through. But the story isn't fully written yet. God is storing up the hail. He is preparing for a day when all of our tattered stories will have a new chapter written in them, when all the unresolved plot points will be resolved, and we will worship God around the throne for telling with history the best story ever told.

God is ultimately over the times and seasons and will steer it all for his glory and for our good. Evil is having its fun right now, but there's coming a day of battle and war, when the hail of God's judgment will rain down, evil will be destroyed, and new life will follow.

⁶ Ortlund, Eric. Piercing Leviathan (Downer's Grove: Intervarsity, 2021). 64.

God is speaking from the storm and storing up the hail saying, “Your story isn’t done yet. If you blew your one shot at having a great family and you think that defines your existence, it doesn’t, because the story will keep going.

If you sinned and feel you will always be labeled and identified by what you did, that’s not forever.

If you blew your chance at choosing a great career.

If you’ve been falsely accused and everyone believes it so you’re isolated unjustly, or if you’ve ruined relationships, and you feel you will always be lonely and ruined - that evil has won - we have a great champion in Jesus who will defeat evil finally one day. We’re just not to that part of the story yet.

This doesn’t mean we should deny our suffering or pretend it isn’t real. But we do need to put it in its proper perspective, and see it as having its place in an eternal story. Because there’s coming that day of judgment followed by renewal, the day of battle and war, there is good to come for Christians. When you’re the ones the storm is FOR rather than the ones that the storm is AGAINST, you have a lot to hope in.

When we’re going through a bad trial, it can be all-consuming. We have those few moments in the morning when we first wake up, and we don’t know what day it is, we aren’t thinking about the problem, everything’s peaceful, but then we feel the weight come on us again. And the problem can seem all-consuming, never-ending, and it seems like it only grows like a fire that won’t stop until it has consumed every last bit of us.

But this storehouse of hail reminds us that it will end.

And then, for Christians, even if we die with our problems unresolved, we will rise again. And that life in the resurrection will go on forever. So that horrible thing we experienced, will shrink relative to eternity. And after 100 years in heaven, that 50 year crisis in our lives will still be a plot point in our story, but will seem smaller. And then after 1000, much smaller, and after a million...all of our trials will shrink relative to the eternal life we have in Jesus.

Which doesn’t fix them now. It doesn’t explain them now. It doesn’t mean it’s a sin to grieve and weep and feel pain. But it does relativize them - it does constrain them - it does give some hope in them.

And maybe, if we can discern a purpose in some of our suffering, one of the purposes is to remind us again and again to go all-in on Jesus and the resurrection He promises.

Maybe our failure to ever achieve the comfort we are after in this life is God's gracious reminder to not love comfort and ease here. Maybe it's part of His kindness to wean us off of this place. The futility, the inability we have to make life stable and secure and easy and drama-free, and to make all of our relationships thrive, could be God's grace to us to continually push our hearts and our hopes toward Jesus and the eternity we have with Him.

But whatever God's purposes, we know that what seems out of control and unruly and all-consuming now just won't be forever - God will tame it.

Your suffering is a real plot point in your story, and it may define this season, but it doesn't define you.

God continues in chapter 38 and 39 taking Job on a tour of the constellations and nature - all to show God's power to control the uncontrollable.

Lions (38:39-40), Ravens (38:41), Mountain goats (39:1-4), wild donkeys (39:5-8), ostriches (39:13-18), Horses (39:19-25), and hawks (39:26-30). They are all untamed or difficult-to-tame animals, animals that behave chaotically (like the ostriches not caring for their young,) yet all are under the control of God.

They all look like chaotic, unrestrained creatures, but God is sovereign over all of them.

God God shows his wisdom, his knowledge, his kind rule over creation, His goodness and provision all throughout the world. He is not the God who doesn't care and loves to destroy creation, but the wise sustainer of creation.

And Job sees it now. Job made accusations, and now he has had his day in court, and God has shown exhibit after exhibit to prove that God is not the evil random agent of chaos that Job accused Him of being, but is, in fact, kinder, wiser, and more involved than Job ever thought.

And so far, we've observed 9 things God has taught Job and us about when we suffer and it doesn't make sense and we don't know if we should trust God:

- 1) **God is kinder than we expect or deserve**
- 2) **God Is Attentive to His Creation as the Good Creator**
- 3) **God is Far Above Us and Can Comprehend What We Cannot, so we Aren't In a Position to Be His Judge.**
- 4) **Chaos and Evil Are Allowed for a Time, But Are Limited by God.**
- 5) **There Is Still a Lot of Good in God's Creation**
- 6) **God limits not only evil, but evil people**
- 7) **God isn't passive or indifferent toward evil in the world**
- 8) **The story isn't over yet: God will one day defeat evil**
- 9) **Which means your suffering isn't your whole story**

These are not answers for why you are suffering. Job never learns why he went through all of this, even at the happy ending of the story that we'll see in two weeks. These are truths that help you cling to God in your suffering.

So Job has made his case, God has made his case, and Job knows he lost the debate:

Job 40:3 "3 Then Job answered the Lord and said:

4 "Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer you?

I lay my hand on my mouth.

5 I have spoken once, and I will not answer;

twice, but I will proceed no further."

Job says, "I'll be quiet now." And he uses the language you would use of a courtroom setting to describe the moment someone admits defeat, has no more arguments, has nothing left to say. Job says the world is chaotic and god rules unjustly and chaotically, God takes him through the natural world to show him that isn't so.

And Job realizes his argument was refuted and decides to drop his case. He is just going to be quiet now.

But that isn't God's whole aim. Yes, Job needed to be put in his place and reminded that God is Creator and Job is creation - that humility is needed and good.

But God is going to give Job the desire of his heart, he is going to bring him back into worship and relationship with God. God is going to speak again, and that's the speech we'll look at next week.

But think of how this points us to Jesus.

God's hailstones were thrown at Christ.

God's storm was directed where we never expected it to go. His lightening was sent right into the heart of his son.

So we could know new life.

Assurance:

Isaiah 44:22 **“I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud and your sins like mist; return to me, for I have redeemed you.”**