

We are beginning our final descent in the book of Job as we continue with the dialogue between God and Job in chapters 40 and 41 before Mark lands the plane next week. We are coming in mid-conversation. If you remember last week, Jed covered the first of God's responses to Job in chapters 38 & 39, where God speaks to Job out of the storm and begins to remind Job of His sovereignty and sufficiency.

In this part of the dialogue from God to Job, God is focusing primarily on the natural order and creation. He asks a series of rhetorical questions to Job. For example, where was Job when God created everything? Where was Job while God was laying the foundations of the earth, setting boundaries of water, weather, mountains, and animals?

What a scene this must have been! We find out that God is finally speaking to Job out of a storm, as Job had been begging him to do.

But before we get into today's text, let's pray.

After all of this rhetorical questioning and insight into creation, God closes the speech with another question to Job (Job 40:1-2): "Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him? Let him who accuses God answer him!"

Before we just skip to Job's answer, there are a couple of key words that God uses here that have been thematic in the book of Job. Notice the words "contend" and "accuses" used there by God.

Way back in the opening of the book, we are introduced to a Challenger making accusations toward God and contending with God about His policies in governing the world, especially as it concerned why people would choose to follow God. To which God addresses...

Dr. John Walton perhaps lays this out in the most compelling and simple way. Accusations are made against God's policies:

Challenger contends that it is bad policy for righteous people to prosper because that will subvert their motivations for righteousness.

God defends this and says there is a righteous man named Job who doesn't just like me for the blessings, and He will remain faithful to me, even through suffering. To which he does overall... despite unwise counsel from friends, Job refuses to curse God or fall prey to Cause and Effect theology, which has been labeled the Retribution Principle. But along the way, Job begins to question the justice of God... As Walton puts it...

Job contends that it is bad policy for righteous people to suffer because that is inconsistent with God's just character.

As much as I like to imagine myself a bit more put together than Job...

It is crazy how quickly I can get on the fast track when things start to go differently than I think they should in my life—from humble questioning to subtle assumptions and assertions of my own pride...

"God, why would you let that happen? I am a pretty flawed person and would never let such a painful or wicked thing happen... Do you really know what you are doing up there? Are you sure you have things under control?" I was reminded of how quickly I can go there this week, where one moment I am celebrating my Wedding Anniversary, to getting a phone call that I did not expect...

And slowly and subtly begin to think I am wiser & more moral and more just - more sovereign than God.

So after God says, 'Hey you, guy who is accusing me - now that I have reminded you that I am God and you are not... what do you have to say for yourself?'

And here it is... - **Job 40:3-5**

Then Job answered 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.'

I think it is fair to say here in this moment that Job is pretty shook. He has just heard the voice of God, and God has flexed his power and might. Which I think for Job is a whole new feeling... Job is used to being the iconic figure and the guy who wielded so much power that he left people speechless...

In fact, Job's response to God is how he described how people usually responded to him in Job 29:7-10 would happen as he entered the public square - People KNEW HIM... they put respect on his name... or 'gave him his flowers' as the cool kids would say... Job was such a big deal that he was the original inductee into the One name Hall of Fame... before there was Jordan, LeBron, or Serena, Pele, Cher, Michelangelo, or Aristotle - there was Job.

He noted in that chapter that he was held in such high regard that the noblest of men would refrain from speaking and cover their mouths... That's how big of a deal Job was... how much honor he had.

Which is likely why Job has the confidence that he shows in Job 31:35-37 as he closes his conversation with his three friends by saying... if I had the opportunity to stand before God, I am going to walk in like a prince and give him a piece of my mind... But in this moment, the great chasm between infinite and finite has been realized and exposed... and Job is left speechless, like he had witnessed many times before him. And so God will speak again in chapters 40 & 41. But this time, God takes an even more expansive approach and zooms beyond the natural and ordered world that was created to the more CHAOTIC and Supernatural. He wants Job to see things from a new perspective.

Job 40:6-14

Then the Lord spoke to Job out of the storm: 'Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me.'

'Would you discredit my justice?

Would you condemn me to justify yourself?

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 all who are proud and bring them low, look at all who are proud and humble them, 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.

Or to put it another way, 'Job, beyond getting angry and complaining about the cosmic problem of pain and evil? Can you stop them? Do you have the power to save yourself? And now this is where things start to get really bizarre... Most of us normal people and scholars agree that this strangest and most confusing section in the whole book. Next things get really bizarre as God follows up with two case studies. We are introduced to two creatures by the name of Behemoth in the rest of Chapter 40 - (Job 40:15–24) and Leviathan for the entirety of Chapter 41 (Job 41:1-34).

A quick tangent into the complexity and scholarship... There is no shortage of debate on who these creatures are and what they represent. Some commentators will lean into them being early ancestors of the Hippopotamus and the crocodile... others will build a case for Dinosaurs out of these chapters and point toward these as some of the proof text for their co-existence with people on the earth.

And I am not saying that cannot be true... but I don't think that is the point of the text here. The debate about what animals they were or that spawned from them can be fun.

In fact, the latest renderings have come out of what these actually looked like – provided by my two kids based on me reading to them. (**Kids photos**)

But may detract us from what God is trying to communicate with Job here. Nearly every ancient civilization has some sort of art depicting giant reptilian creatures... And although some of these represent reality and many of them represent illustrations and depictions of concepts like CHAOS and Non-Order. Most of ancient Creation Narratives include this idea of a God or gods who bring order, and yet there are certain spaces or beings that represent CHAOS or NO-ORDER...

I tend to side with Dr. John Walton that these likely would have been understood as CHAOS Creatures - Not necessarily good or bad... moral or immoral, but - MORALLY NEUTRAL...

I think of it a lot like a Tornado...A tornado is a disruption to order... A tornado out in the middle of nowhere... not a big deal. One on the other side of the country we know and hear about it... thoughts and prayers... but when it rips through your home... it's more painful. More dramatic... more devastating... it does not choose its destination or path, but how close you are to it... the chaos is more felt...

Chaos in and of itself is part of the Cosmos... our position will determine our perspective.

Job and the audience would have had context for these sorts of beings that represented chaos and a disorder from things that are a part of our natural world.

We have some of these in our society. Sort of mythical creatures that exist outside of our common reality, but have meaning culturally.

- Unicorns
- Elves
- Mermaids
- Vampires
- Leprechaun
- Fairy

Each is a bit mysterious and whimsical... yet generally understood and pictured. And are used in narratives and writings to help broaden imagination and understanding... morally neutral characters...

So with both literary context and historical context, this seems to be stepping back from a PERSPECTIVE of the natural world of order that God described in His first speech into the supernatural world with understood otherworldly creatures.

And God seems to use both creatures differently - The first of the creature is Behemoth...Again, Dr. John Walton helps us follow the literary design pattern by listing this out the comparisons. As if God is saying... Take note Job...

Job Compared to Behemoth

Job 40:15 Starts with a comparison - "along with you"

Job 40:15 Content and well-fed (as you have been)

Job 40:16–18 Made strong (as I made you)

Job 40:19 Ranks first among its kind (as you do)

Job 40:20 Cared for (as you were)

Job 40:21–22 Sheltered (as you were)

Job 40:23 Not alarmed by the raging river (as you should not be)

Job 40:23 Trusts and is secure (as you should be)

Job 40:24 Cannot be captured or trapped (to which you should also be invulnerable)

Job 40:24 Nose (= anger) cannot be "pierced" (to which you should also be invulnerable)

We clearly see that God is wanting Job to see and understand that Behemoth and Job were both created by him. To draw some comparison between the two.

Next, God changes creatures and moves toward Leviathan. Instead of making a comparison between Job and this creature, God immediately begins to move to a different perspective... a focus on what Job cannot do to Leviathan in a series of rhetorical questions... God says, "can "you" do this Job"

God Compared to Leviathan

Job 41:1–2 Cannot be controlled (neither can God)

Job 41:3–6 Will not submit or beg for mercy (neither will God)

Job 41:7–9 Cannot be wounded or subdued; hopeless to struggle against him (the same is true of God)

Job 41:10 Outright comparison: can't rouse him, so who can stand against me? (God)

Job 41:11 No one (including you, Job) has a claim against me (God)

Job 41:12–18 Cannot force his mouth open to receive a bridle (so God cannot be controlled or domesticated)

Job 41:19–25 Dangerous when riled (as is God)

Job 41:26–32 Invulnerable (as is God)

Job 41:33 No creature is his equal (nor is Job Leviathan's equal, let alone God's equal)

Job 41:34 Dominates all who are proud (God is also the king of the proud in the sense that he rules over them)

God continues to describe the power and prowess of this creature and remind Job that he is powerless against a creature like this... and if this is simply a creature created by God - How much more powerful is God?

If I am Job and suffering... frustrated in the middle of my circumstances, I would be tempted to think... what in the world do these crazy creatures have to do with my circumstances?

No doubt, the circumstances and situations Job has found himself in feel like CHAOS... and I think God is showing up in his Kindness to show Job that He is in control... I created the world and everything in it, and I am the LORD over this world... but beyond that Job, I am LORD OVER THE CHAOS...

God gives Job a gift of Heavenly Perspective - a Perspective to set him free from the dungeon of despair and the prison of his own perspective.

I am convinced that the most dangerous and miserable place to live is the prison of our poor perspective. One that is so locked in on the situation... the here and the now... That our perspective has us shackled to fear and paralyzed... usually we willingly waltz into this prison through the doorway of our pride. And we stay BOUND up in a cell with limited reception and poor perception.

God wants to set us free from the prison of our perspective.

And a limitless God is kind enough to show up and zoom out on Job's limited perspective. And this point is not lost on Job... and we can see this from his reaction.

Job 42:1-6

Then Job replied to the Lord: "I know that you can do all things; no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

You asked, 'Who is this that obscures my plans without knowledge?' Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know."

You said, 'Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me.' My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."

What a moment that must have been.... Job is set free from the prison of his poor perspective as he sees God.... And is humbled.

Only humility can get you out of the mess that pride has gotten you in.

What a gift to get a gift of God's perspective. I picture this moment like many in my life where I have gone to God kicking and screaming about situations I have been in. Diagnoses I would have not dreamed up... only to get a glimpse of God's perspective and step back and say wow... I cannot imagine my life right now without these realities...

Would I have wished for them? NO - NEVER... - But God, I have gotten a glimpse of your plan, and I am sorry I stayed in the prison of my perspective for so long. Proper perspective can turn what you see as a burden into a blessing. Friends more often than we would like to admit... we need to be reminded of the Gap that exists between you and God...

When we are mindful of the gap between us and God, we become more grateful for the gift of grace that God has given.

The only thing we contribute to our salvation is the sin that made it necessary. Good news is only ever good news to people who know that they need good news. At the end of the day, the main character of the book of Job is not a man named Job, but it is GOD... and it is through the perspective of the life of Job that we are able to step back and see God more clearly... a God who is not limited to our personal perspective.

A God who is far more in control than we ever could be... a God who is not just distant and aloof in the midst of our pain but shows up. God shows up in the middle of pain... and answers in His majesty... Don't miss the reality that God showed up for Job in the middle of his disappointment, grief, and suffering... and revealed himself to Him.... set him free from the prison of his perspective... this Bible is a story after story of a God who shows up... In fact, the God of the universe would show up as a person who would look a lot like Job... Righteous... did nothing to deserve His pain and suffering... The God of the Universe, who showed up and spoke to Job, showed up on this planet in the form of Jesus...

To both make us mindful of the Gap that exists between us and God... But to also solve the problem that the gap creates. To give us a fresh perspective on how to live, what it means to be human... and what a perfect life looks like.

But the thing about Jesus was that He didn't stay dead... He died and defeated death so that you do not have to fear death... he took on suffering and disease and proved that they do not have the last word.

So that we can stand and sing -

*Hallelujah, praise the one who set me free
Hallelujah, death has lost its grip on me
You have broken every chain
There's salvation in your name
Jesus Christ, my living hope*

Church it is Jesus Christ who is our living hope!

I want to end today a bit differently with a poem from **Adrian Plass**

*When I became a Christian I said, Lord, now fill me in,
Tell me what I'll suffer in this world of shame and sin.
He said, Your body may be killed, and left to rot and stink,
Do you still want to follow me? I said Amen – I think.
I think Amen, Amen, I think, I think I say Amen,
I'm not completely sure, can you just run through that again?
You say my body may be killed and left to rot and stink,
Well, yes, that sounds terrific, Lord, I say Amen – I think.
But, Lord, there must be other ways to follow you, I said,
I really would prefer to end up dying in my bed.
Well, yes, he said, you could put up with the sneers and scorn and spit,
Do you still want to follow me? I said Amen – a bit.
A bit Amen, Amen, a bit, a bit I say Amen,
I'm not entirely sure, can we just run through that again?
You say I could put up with sneers and also scorn and spit,
Well, yes, I've made my mind up, and I say, Amen – a bit.
Well, I sat back and thought a while, then tried a different ploy,
Now, Lord, I said, the Good book says that Christians live in joy.
That's true he said, you need the joy to bear the pain and sorrow,
So do you want to follow me, I said, Amen – tomorrow.
Tomorrow, Lord, I'll say it then, that's when I'll say Amen,
I need to get it clear, can I just run through that again?*

*You say that I will need the joy, to bear the pain and sorrow,
Well, yes, I think I've got it straight, I'll say Amen – tomorrow.
He said, Look, I'm not asking you to spend an hour with me
A quick salvation sandwich and a cup of sanctity,
The cost is you, not half of you, but every single bit,
Now tell me, will you follow me? I said Amen – I quit.
I'm very sorry Lord I said, I'd like to follow you,
But I don't think religion is a manly thing to do.
He said forget religion then, and think about my Son,
And tell me if you're man enough to do what he has done.
Are you man enough to see the need, and man enough to go,
Man enough to care for those whom no one wants to know,
Man enough to say the thing that people hate to hear,
To battle through Gethsemane in loneliness and fear.
And listen! Are you man enough to stand it at the end,
The moment of betrayal by the kisses of a friend,
Are you man enough to hold your tongue, and man enough to cry?
When nails break your body-are you man enough to die?
Man enough to take the pain, and wear it like a crown,
Man enough to love the world and turn it upside down,
Are you man enough to follow me, I ask you once again?
I said, Oh Lord, I'm frightened, but I also said Amen.
Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen; Amen, Amen, Amen,
I said, Oh Lord, I'm frightened, but I also said, Amen.*

It's a couple of chapters later in John 16:33, that Jesus makes two promises before he heads to the cross that help us live with proper perspective...

John 16:33 - *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world, you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*