

Finally, God Speaks!

May 13, 2018

Job 38-39

Finally! Finally we get to hear from God Himself. For so long in our study of the book of Job, we have heard from people who have spoken for God. Job has, his friends have, and finally Elihu has. But now, God speaks for Himself. It is intriguing to think about how He spoke. Was it audible? Was it public? Was it while Job was awake or asleep? We are not told. We are simply told that God answered Job.

And as we consider His speech, we immediately notice several things. First of all, He does not provide many (if any) direct answers to Job's questions. Instead, He asks rhetorical questions. In other words, He turns around the scenario envisioned by Job. Job thought he would march into the throne room of God, ask his questions, and then demand answers. But instead, God speaks by asking Job questions. And the questions all lead to the same answers. Job has to answer, "No." to each one. "Were you there when I . . ." "No, I wasn't there." "Did you set the limits to the day and the night?" "No, I did not." "Who sends the rain?" "Not me." Job does not answer any of these rhetorical questions, but if he did, he would have to answer in the negative. In fact, not only would he have to admit it was not him, but he would then have to acknowledge that it was Yahweh who did it.

Then we notice that the subject matter of the questions is all about nature. Some of it is the creation and sustenance of the world, some the heavens and the mountains and especially the seas, and much of it is from the animal kingdom. So, in a sense, God appeals to creation to answer Job. In other words, if Job had simply looked around him, the answers to his questions would be found in nature. How the world works under the watchful eye of Almighty God tells us how He operates.

The third and perhaps most important thing we see here is that this language is poetic, with rich meaning well beyond the literal words. It is here that we find the teaching that Job needs to hear. In other words, when God appeals to the deep or darkness or chaos, we know what He is pointing us toward evil. When He appeals to the changes that come in the morning, we understand the imagery. He is not just describing dawn, but is also pointing us to the battle of light and darkness. In other words, we must keep in mind that God is not here giving us a tour of creation so much as God is here explaining about His role in the created order, even with the

presence of evil, violence, and suffering. His speech is precisely on point, but is spoken in poetic pictures.

And throughout, the truth that God is in charge of it all is ever clear. This world has design, by a Master Architect, a Master Gardener, a Master Zookeeper, a God who speaks and creation answers, obeys, does exactly as He pleases. So, the picture presented is that Yahweh is in charge and if we simply look around, we will understand who He is and who we are not. If Job had simply done this, he would not have made such ignorant statements about God.

This speech from God spans 4 chapters, with only the briefest interjection from Job himself. (40:3-5) I'm going to deal with it over two sermons. I know it is a lot of text, but I see some real value in simply hearing what He says. The text itself paints the picture. READ Job 38-39.

Main point: This world, including the evil in it, is under the direct control of Yahweh.

Can you see how this ultimately answers Job's basic question? Job's contention is that all this evil has happened to Job and God has done nothing. He wants God to explain why. Well, this is the explanation: if you would just look around, you would see that evil is under the control of God. He sets its boundaries and limits. He uses it for His purposes. Now, this does not mean that God is guilty for it, but it does mean that this world as He has created has a place for it. As evil as it is, it can serve a good purpose. (2 parts)

I. God sets all limits. 38:1-38

All of creation is under His control. Nothing is beyond the scope of His authority, power, or concern. Can you see how this fits Job's situation? Job has been impugning God, claiming God did not care about him, did not hear him when he cried out, was unconcerned when evil prospered and he suffered. This is the beginning of his response:

v.I- Then the LORD answered Job out of the storm. He said:

Here, we notice that God is referred to here by His proper name, Yahweh. We last saw this name back in chapter 2. In other words, He is speaking, not as Almighty God, but as the One true God who keeps His promises. This is the covenant keeping God of His chosen people.

We also notice that He answers. What follows is not just His speech, but His answer. But isn't the answer really a series of questions? Precisely! We see Jesus employing the same teaching technique. "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "Well, what does the Law say?" "Teacher, is it right for us to pay taxes to Caesar?" Well, whose picture is on the coin?" I think we could make a solid case for the One with ultimate authority turning the questioning around on His questioners. In one sense, this is the answer to Job's questioning of God. He turns it around, establishing His authority by the use of questions.

Then we notice that Yahweh answers out of the storm, or out of the whirlwind. We could see this term used several times elsewhere as the setting for God speaking, but what I want you to notice is that He is speaking out of the storm, or He is in control of the storm and utilizing it for His purposes. Again, I see this as answering Job. From Genesis 1 to the top of Mt. Sinai, to here in Job, to Elijah and elsewhere, Yahweh establishes the fact that He acts/speaks into/out of chaos. In other words, He is in control of chaos, storms, whirlwinds. They are not chaotic to Him. They are not beyond His control. He uses them for His purposes, a point that we noted in one of Elihu's speeches.

2 "Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? 3 Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me.

I picture God scanning the horizon to spot this insignificant creature. It is clear that there is a comparison of size and knowledge and importance here. His first question is, "Who?" I think of the evil spirit in the Acts 19, who was commanded to leave a person by a Jewish priest, and he answered the priest, "Jesus I know, and I

know about Paul, but who are you?” He recognized authority, but this man was not his authority. So it is here. Job is not Yahweh’s authority. He does not HAVE to answer. He does so because He chooses to do so. The relative authority is set: Yahweh has all of it!

Then He challenges Job to “brace yourself like a man,” or “gird up your loins” in older translations. This was reaching down between your legs, grabbing your garment, pulling it up and tucking it in your belt. There, now you were ready to run, fight, engage in some manly activity. We might think of it as, “Put up your dukes!” Now, the setting is not a fight, not a contest, but simply a conversation that will take all of Job’s manliness to engage in. “Get ready, you’re entering into a serious conversation with the God of the universe!”

4 “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? Tell me, if you understand. 5 Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? 6 On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone— 7 while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?

Notice the subject matter (creation) and the imagery (Master Designer and Builder.) And the point is that Yahweh created this universe precisely according to His plan. He laid the cornerstone, He measured it precisely. And when He got done building all of it, all of the angelic beings cheered. Where was Job when this happened? Nowhere to be found. Things were exactly according to plan. Now, this is where it begins to get tricky.

8 “Who shut up the sea behind doors when it burst forth from the womb, 9 when I made the clouds its garment and wrapped it in thick darkness, 10 when I fixed limits for it and set its doors and bars in place, 11 when I said, ‘This far you may come and no farther; here is where your proud waves halt?’

Part of His creation was the sea, and it needed to be bound, limited. Drawing from the world of child birth, He says the seas came gushing out of the womb. They

needed to be wrapped in swaddling cloths, fixed limits, behind strong barriers. Notice the authority of the statement, “This far you may come and no farther; here is where your proud waves halt.” Can you see that this is not just about seas and waves? This is about evil, violence, the chaos that is the seemingly unrestrainable created order. And yet, God said, “This far and no farther!” Ring any bells? Of course it does. This is exactly what God said in the heavenly meetings at the beginning of the book. “Satan, you can go this far and no farther!” It is not a battle between two forces: good and evil. It is not that evil gets to do what it wants. Evil is under limits as the sea is hemmed in by shorelines. God fixes the limits and builds dams, dikes, breakwaters. It never goes past the limits imposed by God, even in hurricanes. It is the same with evil. It can never go beyond the limits set by God.

12 “Have you ever given orders to the morning, or shown the dawn its place, 13 that it might take the earth by the edges and shake the wicked out of it? 14 The earth takes shape like clay under a seal; its features stand out like those of a garment. 15 The wicked are denied their light, and their upraised arm is broken.

Again, I hope you are beginning to see the imagery. God is in charge of mornings. He brings light to the darkness. He takes the world by the corners and shakes the wicked out of it. Notice the word “wicked.” I thought this was about nature, creation? It uses creation imagery to make points about good and evil. Here, there is morning after darkness. Each and every day, God shines His light on darkness. He does so to expose and deal with the wickedness of the dark. There are limits to the deeds done in darkness, it is called morning or dawn. And God is in charge of morning. He deals with the deeds of darkness in the morning. He breaks the raised fists of the wicked in the morning. We should know this is true just by looking at the world around us. God does it every day. Make sense? Next, He brings up death.

16 “Have you journeyed to the springs of the sea or walked in the recesses of the deep? 17 Have the gates of death been shown to you? Have you seen the gates of the shadow of death? 18 Have you comprehended the vast expanses of the earth? Tell me, if you know all this. 19 “What is the way to the abode of light? And where does darkness reside? 20 Can you take them to their places? Do you know the paths to

their dwellings? [21](#) Surely you know, for you were already born! You have lived so many years!

Yahweh knows the depths, the deepest of the depths. From there, you can see the gates to the place of the dead. Yahweh has been there, Job has not. Job has yearned for death as a place for him to experience peace. But God responds, “Have you ever been there? I think not. I think if you were to see what happens at death, you would not be so quick to yearn to go there.” By definition, since Job was still alive, he has never been to the place of the dead.

Pause: I do not want you to hear this and fear death. That is not the point, as long as you know Jesus, as long as you have your Friend in his places, as long as you have a living Redeemer. Believers ought never fear death. But it is true that too many who have never experienced death speak as though they know all about it, know that it would be a relief for them, yearn for it in fact. Such people speak words without knowledge. If you want to know about death, listen to the One who has been there, who brings life out of death. Amen? Next it is things that bring both good and bad.

[22](#) “Have you entered the storehouses of the snow or seen the storehouses of the hail, [23](#) which I reserve for times of trouble, for days of war and battle? [24](#) What is the way to the place where the lightning is dispersed, or the place where the east winds are scattered over the earth? [25](#) Who cuts a channel for the torrents of rain, and a path for the thunderstorm, [26](#) to water a land where no man lives, a desert with no one in it, [27](#) to satisfy a desolate wasteland and make it sprout with grass? [28](#) Does the rain have a father? Who fathers the drops of dew? [29](#) From whose womb comes the ice? Who gives birth to the frost from the heavens [30](#) when the waters become hard as stone, when the surface of the deep is frozen?

God controls the bringing of moisture to the earth, sometimes in the form of rain, sometimes snow, sometimes hail, sometimes dew, sometimes ice. They are all chemically the same, but the results are very different. We all want rain, but not too much. But we don't want hail, unless your roof needs to be replaced and you have insurance. Is snow good? Well, it depends on when and where and how much and how much wind with it and whether you are trying to drive in it. Right? Who is in

control of all of that? God. He gets to set the limits on all of it, and what we might think is too much He thinks is just right. We get angry because the seeds we planted lack moisture. He is forcing the seeds to establish stronger roots. He's in charge of it all and sends exactly what He intends on sending. We are in control of none of it.

[31](#) “Can you bind the beautiful Pleiades? Can you loose the cords of Orion? [32](#) Can you bring forth the constellations in their seasons or lead out the Bear with its cubs? [33](#) Do you know the laws of the heavens? Can you set up God's dominion over the earth? [34](#) “Can you raise your voice to the clouds and cover yourself with a flood of water? [35](#) Do you send the lightning bolts on their way? Do they report to you, ‘Here we are’? [36](#) Who endowed the heart with wisdom or gave understanding to the mind? [37](#) Who has the wisdom to count the clouds? Who can tip over the water jars of the heavens [38](#) when the dust becomes hard and the clods of earth stick together?

The fact that the stars are set in the heavens in such a way as to recognize constellations is evidence that there is a structure, an order to it all and God has established it that way. Since mankind's beginning, sailors have been able to navigate by the stars. Could they do so if the stars were chaotic, if you never knew where they would be the next night? No, there is order in the universe, an order set by God, who established it by His plan and keeps it going exactly according to that plan. Nothing is random, nothing is by chance, nothing is beyond His control. He limits everything, even the things that seem chaotic. Modern man sees the order and marvels that ransom acts resulted in order. We study the order and marvel at the God who created it this way.

I trust you can see how this fits. Job has claimed that what has happened to him happened because God was negligent in His duties, asleep at the switch, forgetting who he was. But that is offensive to God. He is in complete control all of the time. Look around, and you will see it for yourself. Look up, look down, look in, look out. Wherever you look, you will see the order, the limits created by God, even in the whirlwind.

II. God's plan includes good purposes for evil. 38:39-39:30

It is not just that there is order, there are limits, but that such order, such limits have purpose. To make this point, God turns to the animal world, particularly the wild animal world. This distinction is key. By definition, wild animals are...wild. They are not farm animals. Given our setting, it makes sense that God would use the order of the wild animal kingdom to make his point. Indeed, notice how He brings up the good purpose for calamity from the wild animal kingdom.

[39](#) “Do you hunt the prey for the lioness and satisfy the hunger of the lions [40](#) when they crouch in their dens or lie in wait in a thicket? [41](#) Who provides food for the raven when its young cry out to God and wander about for lack of food?

We have all seen the image of cute little lion cubs, right? And they need to eat to grow, right? But what do they eat? Meat. And how do they get meat? Their mother kills it. So, how cute are the lion cubs to the deer that lost its life so they could eat their next meal? The same for the raven, whose young eat dead meat. Can you see the point? In God's created world, sometimes harm, death comes to part of it for the good purposes of another part of it. And all of it is under the watchful eye of Almighty God.

We know the setting. We have all seen video of the animal of prey chasing down and killing their next meal. Does this make us happy or sad? I guess it depends on whether we like cheetahs or gazelles more! But that is the way God has designed this world. He created meat eaters, with teeth and jaws designed for killing. We cannot blame the lion for being a lion. And we also cannot fool ourselves into thinking we can domesticate them to keep them from killing. That is not who they are. They are wild animals!

[39:1](#) “Do you know when the mountain goats give birth? Do you watch when the doe bears her fawn? [2](#) Do you count the months till they bear? Do you know the time they give birth? [3](#) They crouch down and bring forth their young; their labor pains are ended. [4](#) Their young thrive and grow strong in the wilds; they leave and do not return. [5](#) “Who let the wild donkey go free? Who untied his ropes? [6](#) I gave him the wasteland as his home, the salt flats as his habitat. [7](#) He laughs at the commotion

in the town; he does not hear a driver's shout. [8](#) He ranges the hills for his pasture and searches for any green thing.

God is the One who designed the birth cycle of animals. He knows when, where, and how they will give birth. He knows the painful labor they go through to give birth. (There, I talked about giving birth on Mother's Day!) And they leave never to come back! Or said another way, is there Mother's Day in the animal kingdom? No, they never return to give thanks.

Even so-called domesticated animals will turn wild in the wild. When it comes down to eating or not eating, they will do what they must to eat. Right? They will not treat you right, just because you used to feed them. No, everything is not all sweet and peaceful in the animal kingdom. They see each other not as friends but future meals, or threats to their lives. They will kill each other if they think it is in their best interests. There is purpose in their bringing harm to others. That is the way God has set things up.

[9](#) "Will the wild ox consent to serve you? Will he stay by your manger at night? [10](#) Can you hold him to the furrow with a harness? Will he till the valleys behind you? [11](#) Will you rely on him for his great strength? Will you leave your heavy work to him? [12](#) Can you trust him to bring in your grain and gather it to your threshing floor?"

Wild beasts by definition are not under your control. Go ahead and try if you like. You must not trust wild animals, like by taking selfies with bears, right? Again, the overarching point is that we know this to be true in the animal kingdom, but so it is true in our world as well. Life is not going to be neat and tidy and fair all the time. Sometimes tragedy, calamity, even death will show up. But we must know that it is all under the authority and power of God. And if it happens to you, it must be related to some good purpose that God has, like the lioness killing the deer to feed her cubs. This world is set up to demonstrate that there are good purposes, even with death.

13 “The wings of the ostrich flap joyfully, but they cannot compare with the pinions and feathers of the stork. 14 She lays her eggs on the ground and lets them warm in the sand, 15 unmindful that a foot may crush them, that some wild animal may trample them. 16 She treats her young harshly, as if they were not hers; she cares not that her labor was in vain, 17 for God did not endow her with wisdom or give her a share of good sense. 18 Yet when she spreads her feathers to run, she laughs at horse and rider.

I like this one. God has created some really dumb animals. The ostrich has wings but cannot fly. It does dumb things with its eggs, really dumb things. And yet, God did give her the ability to outrun horses. So, she is a bird that cannot fly, but she can out run a race horse. There, by the hand of God, He makes some of us to really, really lack wisdom. But He still takes care of us, and provides for us in other ways.

19 “Do you give the horse his strength or clothe his neck with a flowing mane? 20 Do you make him leap like a locust, striking terror with his proud snorting? 21 He paws fiercely, rejoicing in his strength, and charges into the fray. 22 He laughs at fear, afraid of nothing; he does not shy away from the sword. 23 The quiver rattles against his side, along with the flashing spear and lance. 24 In frenzied excitement he eats up the ground; he cannot stand still when the trumpet sounds. 25 At the blast of the trumpet he snorts, ‘Aha!’ He catches the scent of battle from afar, the shout of commanders and the battle cry.

Horses used for war will do things that seem to go directly against a horse’s nature. Horses, who will spook at the slightest hint of danger, will run directly into it. God does this, not man. God designed them this way, far beyond our ability to comprehend.

26 “Does the hawk take flight by your wisdom and spread his wings toward the south? 27 Does the eagle soar at your command and build his nest on high? 28 He dwells on a cliff and stays there at night; a rocky crag is his stronghold. 29 From there he seeks out his food; his eyes detect it from afar. 30 His young ones feast on blood, and where the slain are, there is he.”

God has designed birds of prey to be able to nest above their predators, and yet with eyesight to see crawling rodents on the ground. And the final image is that of its young feasting on the blood of the dead rodent. This is the world that God has created. Yes, there is blood, but the blood feeds the young of the eagles.

Yes, there is evil in this world. Yes, there is hardship, strife, calamity, suffering, but we must know that it is limited by the hand of God and for good purposes, if we just possessed the ability to see it. Our problem is that we lack knowledge, we do not see the big picture. If we could see the big picture, we could see how good could come from the tragedy we are suffering.

If we believe this passage is the Word of God, then what should be different about our lives?

1) We will notice the order of creation.

2) We will notice how God uses tragedy to bring about good in the created order.

3) We will notice how God protects, provides, empowers even dumb animals to survive.

4) We will apply that to our world when we would naturally like to think God doesn't know what He is doing.

5) We will keep quiet and allow God to be God.