

JOB 38-41

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INTRODUCTION

As we saw last week, Job's steadfast hope in the God who judges, the God who speaks, is finally vindicated in Yahweh's answer from the whirlwind. But of course God is far more glorious, far more wonderful than even Job can hope for. Insisting that Mt. Everest is amazing is still nothing compared to actually climbing it.

THE SONS OF GOD

Remember Job is an Adam who faces what feels and looks like the unmaking of his world (Job 1-2). Job's initial curse is an utterance calling for the reversal of creation: "Let there be darkness" (3:4, 5-6, 9). Job calls upon the "cursers of the day" to arouse Leviathan to do his part in unmaking the world (3:8). Remember that Job's longing for death and darkness is ultimately related to his longing for a day of judgment, a day in which he might appeal his case to God (9:14-20, 32-35; 13:3, 15; 16:21; 31:35-37). Job is an Adam outside of the presence of God, the greatest of the "sons of the east" (1:3) but not among the "sons of God" who stand before Yahweh, who speak in his presence. But we detected hints even early on that the entire exercise of The Accuser was designed to draw Job up into the presence of God: As Job is a faithful father offering sacrifices for his sons, Yahweh is a faithful father who offers his son Job as a sacrifice. In order to stand before Yahweh one must be drawn up into the fiery storm.

YAHWEH'S FIRST SPEECH

The Wind/Spirit has blown upon Job, and the wind has only increased in the dialogues, culminating in the whirlwind answer of Yahweh (38:1). But the actual content of Yahweh's speeches seems a little odd at first: How do all the questions relate to Job's questions? Much of what Yahweh says Job seems to already understand to some extent (9:2-10). Is Yahweh merely flexing his divine muscles? Yahweh asks, "Who is this who darkens counsel with speeches without knowledge?" (38:2). This may very well be referring to Elihu, although Job seems to refer to it later and is happy to acknowledge his own ignorance (42:3). Yahweh commands Job to prepare for battle (38:3, cf. 1 Sam. 2:4, 2 Sam. 22:40, Ps. 18:40, etc.). He says, "I will question you, and you will make it known to me." (38:3). But this may not be so much a challenge as it is a promise. Given the entire book, we ought to think of God as a Father here, not a power-flaunting monarch. Yahweh speaks eleven poems comprising 9 scenes of creation and 11 different animals (38:4-39:30). He recounts creation (38:4-11), and his first series of questions conclude with reference to the "sons of God" (38:6-7), implying that they know. The following poems dwell on commanding, studying, dividing, and binding various aspects of creation. These scenes and the wild animals that follow picture the world in need of care, taming, and cultivating.

YAHWEH'S SECOND SPEECH

Yahweh asks Job if he would like to cross-examine Him (40:2), and Job says he is really of little account and asks what he could counter with (40:4). He puts his hand on his mouth, and says he is finished answering (40:4-5). Yahweh proceeds and again tells Job to prepare for battle (40:7). This time Yahweh addresses Job directly: Is Job trying to thwart Yahweh's judgment? Is he accusing Him of evil? Does Job have an arm like God (49:9-14)? Part of the point is to draw the contrast tight, but when he points to Behemoth and Leviathan, He says that since Leviathan is so fierce, who will stand before Me (41:10)? But we know that the sons of God do stand before Yahweh, and part of God's greatness and glory is the creation of man: Adam was created as a son to rule creation (Gen. 1:26-28, 2:8-14, 19-20, Ps. 8).

CONCLUSION & APPLICATIONS

Yahweh's speeches certainly dwell on the glory of God and His perfect rule over creation, but Yahweh's answer is also an answer (38:1, 40:1), a drawing near. This transcendent and all sovereign Creator and Sustainer of the Universe is talking to Job, asking him questions. God's answer from the whirlwind is not primarily new information (9: 2-10); rather, it is the overwhelming presence and person of God. The whirlwind is a whirlwind of words, a storm of questions, a survey of God's glory throughout creation. And finally, while many questions have an implied 'No' answer, some are 'Yes' or qualified yes's. God is glorious, but part of that glory is His delight in His children, His sons who stand before Him and learn His wisdom. Adam was the first son of God created to learn and grow up into the wisdom of God exhibited in the whirlwind, and Job is another. And we too are sons, filled with the Spirit, being taught to stand before the Father and rule the world in His wisdom (Rom. 8:14-17, Heb. 4:14-16). And proof that this is what Yahweh is doing is seen in Job's prayer for the three friends at the end (42:7-10).

In the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen.



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