

Job & God - Job 38 - Preparing for Judgment

Well, I think it's safe to say that with Job 38 we reach the climax of the book.

This, for me, is really the most fascinating part of the book. Job has whined and complained about what God has done. He wishes he had an audience with God and - what do you know? - he gets one. But what he gets is nothing like what he anticipates. He had anticipated basically putting God on trial for taking his family and his property and his good health. He would question God, and God would answer him. He would justify himself before God and demand answers of God.

And, of course, that's not how it goes at all. Not even close. Job doesn't ask one question, he doesn't make any accusation. God is not Job's peer. God is Job's maker and the creator and sustainer of the universe and that's exactly what God makes sure Job understands.

The book of Job ends with one of the most fascinating sections of Scripture. Usually when people think of the book of Job they think about how it begins and how it ends. What we spent summarizing over the last 5 weeks, most people forget. But what we look forward to is the proverbial pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

Let me give you just a little bit of preview of coming attractions for us and then we'll dive in.

Chaps. 38-41 are essentially a non-stop barrage of rhetorical questions that God asks Job. In Chapter 38 he focuses on the grandeur of creation - did Job create the universe? Does he cause the morning to come into existence? Can he speak and cause the rain? We could say this is God's cosmic power - God's sovereign absolute power over the cosmos.

Then God transitions at the end of Chap. 38-39 into his power over the animal kingdom. God takes Job on safari and talks about lions and ravens and donkeys and oxen and horses and eagles. Can Job feed them? Does Job know when and where they give birth? Does Job know how long they will live?

And the point seems to be that God cares even for the animals and their most basic needs. It's a good contrast to Chap. 38 because in Chap. 38 we are presented with this great and all-powerful God who reigns over the world. But if the description were just left there, someone could come away with a God who doesn't really care about the life within his creation. But we see here in Job that God's grand design includes the care of animals on every level - from what they eat, to when they give birth, to their power and domestic functions. God cares about them.

In Chap. 40 and 41 we have probably some of the more memorable chapters as God describes Behemoth and Leviathan. When we get there in a few weeks, I'm going to argue that those are what we would now consider dinosaurs. The Behemoth was likely some kind of sauropod dinosaur like brachiosaurus, and Leviathan is a ocean-going dinosaur like plesiosaur or some cousin.

I don't believe Behemoth is a hippo or an elephant. Nor do I believe that Leviathan is a crocodile like what the ESV Study Bible indicates. Those animals don't come close to fitting the simple description of what we see in Job.

Usually the biblical commentators that try to make these animals out to be something you see in the zoo miss the fact that the very description is that you'd never be able to capture this animal and put it in a zoo. Those commentators usually hold to an old earth view and therefore Job could not have possibly lived alongside what we call dinosaurs - so they have to come up with some other explanation other than what seems to be the most obvious.

But the point seems to be that God created these massive monstrous creatures for his own purposes and his own reasons. And although Job and humanity cannot contain them, God can. God has a reason for all of his creation - from mosquitos to cockroaches to dinosaurs - even if we don't know what that reason is.

Kind of like God has a reason for taking away all of Job's kids and all of Job's wealth - even though Job didn't know what it was.

And just as quick as God begins speaking, he ends abruptly. God finishes his description of leviathan and then that's it. And Job is so overwhelmed he realizes how foolish he's been and he repents.

What's the point of all this? All of these questions serve to show how little Job knows and how little power he has in comparison to God who knows all things and superintends all things. It's designed to humble Job into repentance.

Here's what I think we're supposed to take away from this whole section: God's judgment is a scary thing. Even for the most blameless person on the planet - and that was God's own description of Job - judgment is a fearful thing. And we need to be living in light of coming judgment.

And the big takeaway here is this judgment that Job goes through is the kind of judgment we're going to go through.

1) Judgment is giving an account to God, not the other way around. **Read 1-3**

Every aspect of these 3 short verses are humbling. We are reminded that God is the sovereign king of all the universe, whose power is truly unimaginable.

Yahweh answers Job out of the whirlwind. What does that mean? Well, anytime God reveals himself to people in the Bible it's what's called a theophany. Theos = God, phanos = appearing. This is an appearing of God.

God appear to Adam in the Garden. He appeared to Abram as a stranger right before he destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. He appeared Moses in the burning bush.

The book of Hebrews opens by saying "Long ago, at many times and in many ways God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son." (**Heb. 1:1**)

Sometimes God appears in a dream, sometimes he appears like an angel, sometimes he appears as a man, sometimes he's fire in a bush. Sometimes it's pleasant, sometimes not so much.

Here, God appears to Job in a hurricane. This word that's used is strong forceful wind that causes destruction. It's related to the word that was used in the book of Jonah for the massive storm that came upon the sailors headed toward Tarshish. This is not the gentle cool breeze that you enjoy on a summer evening. This is batten down the hatches and prepare for the worst.

In the Middle East they have massive wind storms called haboob. These are the wind storms where it's a nice sunny day and all of a sudden you see a giant wall of sand coming toward you and the whole sky darkens and you run for cover as fast as you can because these things are lightning fast and devastating. That's the idea.

Interestingly, this word is often used to mean fierce judgment.

In **Isa. 29:6** the prophet is talking about the siege of Jerusalem which was God's judgment on his people for their sin: You will be visited by the Lord of hosts with thunder and with earthquake and great noise, with whirlwind and tempest, and the flame of a devouring fire.

This is not God cuddly and cute and ready to comfort Job. This is God whose patience has been exhausted and he appears to Job in the awesome power of gale force wind. He's coming in power.

Judgment has come. **Read 2**

This is a huge contrast from the opening of the book where God introduced Job to Satan in some of the most glowing praise imaginable. Here, the language is almost dismissive. "Who is this that's bothering me?" "Do I know you?" Obviously, God knows who this is. This is more like "Who do you think you are?"

The Lord accuses Job of darkening counsel. The NIV says “obscures my plans.” It’s an odd phrase, but it seems to mean that Job is accusing God of some kind of dark dealing. That Job is accusing God of doing underhanded things.

And, really, we’ve seen some of that. Job has accused God that his ways are not just because Job did nothing wrong. Well, Job may not have done anything wrong, but you’re crossing some serious lines when you say that God is wrong. That he is not just.

And so God basically says: you better prepare for war. **Read 3**

The Hebrew phrase there is “gird up your loins.” I love that phrase. In ancient times men and women wore long robes or tunics all the time. So if you’re going to fight or run you have to pull up your your tunic so you don’t trip on it in battle. So you pull it up and tie it off with a belt of some kind. Ladies, if you’ve ever wore a long dress and tried to run or climb a hill you get the situation.

In any case, this became a saying to prepare for battle. Gird up your loins. Prepare for a fight. **Look over at 40:1-2. Read**

That word contend is battle language. Then, God says essentially the same thing again to Job. **Read 40:6-9**

This is God in angry judgment. Job has acted like a little child with his tantrums. He has demanded an audience with God and he has no idea how powerful God is.

And just think about this. This is the same God who earlier in the book commended Job for being blameless and upright, fearing God and turning away from evil. Amazingly, in **Chap. 42** God will even say that Job spoke right things of him.

What are we supposed to do with that? How do we process God commending Job as righteous and then calling him to battle as he is to give an account?

Here’s how I think we need to understand this. Just because we have been justified by faith alone in Christ alone does not mean that we will escape judgment. We all know that we will give an account to God for our lives. That should give us pause.

1 Peter 4:17 says that judgment begins in the household of God. We’re not going to escape it, it starts with us.

James 3:1 says that those who teach are judged more severely than the rest. Do you know what more severe implies? That it’s all going to be rough.

Jesus says blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy. When we went through the Sermon on the Mount last year, the theme over and over was how you treat others is how God will treat you.

Are you severe with others? Expect God to be severe with you.
Are you impatient with others? Expect God to be impatient with you.
Do you belittle them? Expect to be told to gird up your loins and do battle with God.

Our attitude and actions in this life will be the basis for God’s attitude. We’ll still be in the family because our salvation is based on faith alone in Christ alone. - Job is still in the family. But it might be a rough go.

See, I think if we’re honest, we have this guilty pleasure of seeing someone else get chewed out. There’s part of Job where we kind of chuckle and laugh at this guy for running his mouth because he gets dressed down by God and all of history gets to read the record of his

It’s like when your brother or sister is getting a spanking and you hear it and you’re like “Glad I’m not in there.”

Except you know what? We will be there.

Paul says judgement is like a fire that burns away all the garbage of our lives and the only thing that remains is what was useful for the kingdom. He doesn't mean that when we die we go to Purgatory like the Catholics believe. Catholics believe that when you die you go through Purgatory where you sort of suffer for your sins - it's not hell, but it's not heaven either. It's a purification place before you get to heaven.

Well, there's no Purgatory, but there is judgment.

That's why **Hebrews 12:28** says: Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.

We are to live lives of humble reverence and awe. God's not our homeboy. He's not our bro and we're just chill whatever. He's a consuming fire of holy purity to whom one day we will give an account.

This is a God who is worthy of every obedience and praise and worship we can offer.

But Jason, we're Christians. We have Jesus. You know what Jesus says in **John 5:22**? All judgment has been given from the Father to who? To the Son.

We don't skip judgment just because we believe in Jesus. In fact the reason Jesus says the Father gave all judgment to the Son is "that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father."

That reverence and awe we have of the Father is the exact same reverence and awe we should have of the Son. And frankly, the exact same reverence and awe we should have of the Spirit.

What's that judgment going to look like? I have no idea. Job had no idea what his audience with God was going to look like. And let's be honest, if we were to throw out some ideas about what this accounting was going to look like I don't think we'd imagine God schooling Job on constellations and ostriches and dinosaurs but that's what he does and Job is humbled.

So we walk in humble awe knowing that we will give an account to God, he will not be giving an account to us.

2) The judge is the creator and sustainer of the universe.

When we think about how we conduct ourselves between now and the time we stand before our judge, there are two things that we are to keep in mind according to God. That he is the creator of the universe and the sustainer of the universe. If we miss those we will have a warped view of God.

This is what we're going to see throughout the rest of the chapters. God is creator. He created the universe. He created the sun, moon, stars, earth, shorelines, constellations. And he sustains them all - he keeps the stars where they are, he feeds his creatures, aids in their procreation, designs each creature for a purpose for his glory.

So, how does that help us prepare for judgment? Some people say it doesn't help at all. Some people go so far as to say that God was basically committing red herring fallacies - sidestepping the issues - when he answered Job. As one guy said: (Bernard Shaw) "If I complain that I am suffering unjustly, it is no answer to say, 'Can you make a hippopotamus?'" (NIV Application Study Bible. Walton, John)

While that might be clever, it's wrong. It's wrong because God himself has determined that this is exactly the line of reasoning needed for Job. But - wonder of wonders - it's also exactly the line of reasoning that brings Job to repentance.

It's these chapters where God showcases his sovereign rule over every aspect of the created universe that brings Job to a place of humble awe before God. And it's these chapters that pave the way for God to bless Job again.

So let's take a look. Here, God begins by talking about the earth. **Read 4-11**

Job, were you around when I created the earth? Did you measure it out? And did you decide where the shorelines would be? Did you design the clouds?

What God is doing here is showing Job that his creation is not arbitrary. It's not random. It didn't start randomly, it doesn't continue on in a random fashion. Everything God does is on purpose. He has designed everything out of his wisdom.

Now a lot of how God describes his work is poetic. All of Job is a poetic book. So we need to be careful not to take some things too far. There are people who hold to a flat earth theory because they take biblical poetry too literally.

So in **Vs. 5** when God says he stretched a line on the earth, it doesn't mean he has a literal cosmic tape measure that he wrapped around the earth.

Or in **Vs. 6** it's not like the earth has a literal cornerstone or that God poured concrete to set the globe on.

In **Vs. 8** and **10** there are no doors or bars that hold the sea in place - as though bars could hold the sea in place.

I think most of us understand that. But if you talk to enough people you'll hear some crazy things in the course of time.

This is all poetic to help Job understand God created the earth - the land, seas, and clouds - with wisdom, **on purpose**. God doesn't wing it. He doesn't make it up as he goes along. He doesn't call audibles or have a backup plan. God has only one eternal decree to bring all things to pass precisely as he intends to, in order to bring him eternal glory.

So when you go to the lake or the ocean this summer and look at the shoreline - you are staring at the wisdom of God. He put the shoreline right there on purpose.

He also turns the earth on purpose. **Read 12-15**

Here, God gets more accusatory. When he was talking about the creation of the earth, he simply asked "who has done this?" Here God asks directly "have you done this?" "Have you commanded the morning?" Can you command the morning?

It's God who keeps the earth spinning. In **Vs. 12**, just like a little child grabs his mom's skirt to pull himself up, the sun grabs the earth in the east to pull itself up into the sky. And the dark earth becomes lit up with all of its features. It's as if a mold was pressed onto a flat piece of clay to expose mountains and valleys and rivers and hills.

And this spinning is also a cleansing mechanism. When the light dawn, the sinners flee. Many sins happen in darkness and it's almost as though the morning scrubs the earth of those people who party in the night time.

The next time you're up early sipping your coffee enjoying the beautiful sunrise, know that God is using the light to convict sinners of their wickedness.

What about the bottom of the ocean. Job, what do you know about that? **Read 16-18**

In the Bible the depths of the sea and Sheol - the place of the dead - are used interchangeably. It's hard to know whether God is more talking about the ocean here or Sheol. The OT talks about a place called Sheol. It's the place of the dead - all people who died went to Sheol. There was some idea that the righteous were blessed and the wicked were in torment. But it wasn't really until the NT that heaven and hell were more clearly revealed by God.

But whether God is talking about Sheol or the bottom of the ocean, the fact remains that 3,000 years later we still haven't been to either. We've never to the deepest parts of the ocean. Go to the moon - check. Go to Mars? We're going to check that box soon. Go to the bottom of our own ocean? Not so much.

You know who knows what's down there? God. He formed it. He knows it. He designed it. Just like he designed Sheol, just like he designed everything else. On purpose, with a plan.

What about light and darkness? What about weather? God knows more than we do. **Read 19-30**

What do we really know about light and darkness? What do we really know about weather? Not much.

Where does light come from? How does it work? Is it a particle? Is it heat? Is it a wave? Can it be affected by gravity? How can something with no mass be affected by gravity? In **Vs. 21** God taunts Job - "You're an old guy, you must know!"

What about weather? What do we really know? The old joke is that a weather man can be right half the time and still keep his job.

Job knows nothing about snow or rain or desert conditions. He has no idea about the formation of ice and how God uses all of those to not only water the ground but actually to pour down on enemies in time of battle.

One of these days I will actually finish listening to my biography on George Washington so I'll stop regaling you with illustrations, but it is amazing to me how often a simple turn in the weather changed the course of our history. A little fog here to hide the troops. A bunch of snow in one night causing freezing conditions. Enemy gun powder gets wet from rain. Gods says "You think that's an accident?"

God's got the earth so fine-tuned that the rain in the desert is specifically for grass to grow. God doesn't need a sprinkler system. He doesn't need any timers. He's got critters to take care of and Job doesn't even know where that water comes from.

What about the stars? What about when the stars are covered by clouds? **Read 31-38**

Job can you do any of this? Can you do anything with the constellations? Do you even know why they are where they are? The constellations we see in the sky are nothing new - the ancients knew more about the sky than we ever will - mostly because they spent so much time outside. Job knows nothing of these things.

God has determined their existence. He's also determined the existence of clouds and rain - sort of like what we've seen before. I like **Vs. 37. Read**

It's almost like when it rains God's in heaven pouring out a pitcher over the earth. Obviously that's not a scientific explanation - it's just a picture that rain drops falling on the earth are not accidental. They are part of God's sovereign provision.

God's point in all of this is to get Job to realize that he doesn't know very much, and that he controls even less. And yet, here's Job wanting God to give **him** an account of what's gone on in his life because he feels like he's been dealt a bad hand. Really?

Judgment doesn't go that way. We finite creatures are the ones who give account to the infinite, almighty God. And while we are counted righteous through faith in Christ and our judgment doesn't end in hell, it might include some serious rebuke.

But we live our lives knowing that that judgment is coming. And what God wants of us is humility and awe. That no matter what comes our way, it comes our way because our all-wise God orchestrates it so. And that our response is to humbly recognize his ways are not our ways and that his ways are perfect.

We are of little account - but our God is great. **Pray**