

Day 73 - TUESDAY: January 17th

Job 38

Job 38:1-41 NKJV

Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said: "Who is this who darkens counsel By words without knowledge? Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me. "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, When the morning stars sang together, And all the sons of God shouted for joy? "Or who shut in the sea with doors, When it burst forth and issued from the womb; When I made the clouds its garment, And thick darkness its swaddling band; When I fixed My limit for it, And set bars and doors; When I said, 'This far you may come, but no farther, And here your proud waves must stop!' "Have you commanded the morning since your days began, And caused the dawn to know its place, That it might take hold of the ends of the earth, And the wicked be shaken out of it? It takes on form like clay under a seal, And stands out like a garment. From the wicked their light is withheld, And the upraised arm is broken. "Have you entered the springs of the sea? Or have you walked in search of the depths? Have the gates of death been revealed to you? Or have you seen the doors of the shadow of death? Have you comprehended the breadth of the earth? Tell Me, if you know all this. "Where is the way to the dwelling of light? And darkness, where is its place, That you may take it to its territory,

That you may know the paths to its home? Do you know it, because you were born then, Or because the number of your days is great? "Have you entered the treasury of snow, Or have you seen the treasury of hail, Which I have reserved for the time of trouble, For the day of battle and war? By what way is light diffused, Or the east wind scattered over the earth? "Who has divided a channel for the overflowing water, Or a path for the thunderbolt, To cause it to rain on a land where there is no one, A wilderness in which there is no man; To satisfy the desolate waste, And cause to spring forth the growth of tender grass? Has the rain a father? Or who has begotten the drops of dew? From whose womb comes the ice? And the frost of heaven, who gives it birth? The waters harden like stone, And the surface of the deep is frozen. "Can you bind the cluster of the Pleiades, Or loose the belt of Orion? Can you bring out Mazzaroth in its season? Or can you guide the Great Bear with its cubs? Do you know the ordinances of the heavens? Can you set their dominion over the earth? "Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, That an abundance of water may cover you? Can you send out lightnings, that they may go, And say to you, 'Here we are!?' Who has put wisdom in the mind? Or who has given understanding to the heart? Who can number the clouds by wisdom? Or who can pour out the bottles of heaven, When the dust hardens in clumps, And the clods cling together? "Can you hunt the prey for the lion, Or satisfy the appetite of the young lions, When they crouch in their dens, Or lurk in their lairs to lie in wait? Who provides food for the raven, When its young ones cry to God, And wander about for lack of food?

Daily Deep Dive:

How exciting that we have finally come to the climax of the book of Job and God finally speaks. Here is the reading from the UCG plan: “We arrive now at the beginning of the grand climax of the book. At last God arrives—and in an awesome display of power. Yet as terrifying as the great whirlwind must have been, God is not here to destroy Job. He is here to help Job put things into proper perspective before restoring him to health and to God's service.

It may appear that God has completely ignored all that Elihu has said. This is one of the reasons some believe that the Elihu speeches were added to the book of Job by a later author. Yet without Elihu's description of a coming storm, there would be no antecedent for God answering Job out of *the* whirlwind. That being so, some see the absence of God's acknowledgment of Elihu as an intentional snub to the young man. But this discounts the substance of God's speeches, which follow right on from Elihu's last theme. God in fact does acknowledge him by picking up right where Elihu has left off—stressing His divine power and majesty throughout the creation as the focus Job needs to have.

God refers to Job as one "who darkens counsel by words without knowledge" (verse 2), the latter part echoing Elihu's earlier assessment (see 34:35; 35:16). Yet "how did Job darken (obscure) God's counsel (v. 2)? There can be no doubt that this refers to the extreme language of Job during his moments of poetic rage when he struggled with concepts of a deity who was his enemy—a phantom deity, one his own mind created. Here he needed to brace himself and wrestle with God as he really was (v. 3)" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*, note on verses 2-3).

Job had wanted an audience with God so as to present his case and to question God about what He was doing in regard to his own trial as well

as the sufferings of innocent people in general. But God is not here to subject Himself to such an interrogation. Just the opposite, God says, "*I will question you, and you shall answer Me*" (verse 3). As the *Zondervan NIV Study Bible* comments: "Now God speaks to Job, but not to give Job the justification of his ways that Job had been demanding. Out of the awesome majesty of the thunderstorm, he reminds Job that the wisdom that directs the Creator's ways is beyond the reach of human understanding [as Elihu had been saying]...The format of God's response is to ply Job with rhetorical questions, to each of which Job must plead ignorance. God says nothing about Job's suffering, nor does he address Job's problem about divine justice. Job gets neither a bill of indictment nor a verdict of innocence. But, more important, God does not humiliate or condemn him—which surely would have been the case if the counselors had been right. So by implication Job *is* vindicated, and later his vindication is directly affirmed (see Job 42:7-9...). The divine discourses, then, [as we will see, will] succeed in bringing Job to complete faith in God's wisdom and goodness without his receiving a direct answer to his questions" (notes on Job 38:1, Job 38:3).

What is God's point in all that He says to Job? We must be careful in how we read God's response. Given the exciting build up of the mighty thunderstorm, we are probably inclined to imagine Him blasting Job with a thunderous voice and grilling questions so as to scare and unsettle him. Indeed, some see God's speeches as intended to essentially browbeat Job into an admission of his nothingness before God's mighty power. This is surely wrong. Job needed no such convincing of God's power. As he mourned over all that had befallen him, writhed in the agony of his illness and struggled to understand why this was happening to him, he was already afraid of God, whom he imagined as watching his every step to determine how to further wound him.

The reality is that God is here as a loving parent to comfort a hurting, confused child. He does have a rebuke for Job but it is a soft one, as we will see in chapter 40. Leading up to that, God presents His awesome, incomprehensible works to remind Job of who He is and to demonstrate that Job does not need to worry and fret. The Almighty cares deeply for His whole creation and tends to this vast, unimaginable complexity in ways that people cannot remotely fathom. He cares for Job too, and Job will just have to trust that what is happening to him is part of God's grand design—a design that in the end will somehow be of supreme benefit to Job and others. God is throughout gently chiding Job, basically saying, "Do you understand all this? No, you don't—you can't! But I do. I've got it all taken care of. And when it comes right down to it, that's all you really need to know."

The angels shouting for joy when the earth was formed (Job 38:7) provides the perspective that all should have in considering the wonders of God's creation. (This verse also gives us a rare glimpse into both the spirit realm and the history of creation.) Verses 8-11 tell us that God has set specific boundaries for the sea. As ancient societies saw the sea as a symbol of chaos and destruction (probably due to the great Flood of Noah's day), we can perhaps also see an analogy here—that God sets limits on destructive and harmful forces. Job understood this in theory concerning the sea (see Job 26:12-13). But he needed to apply this important truth to his own life.

Job 38:16, regarding the springs of the sea, is remarkable in an ancient context. Author Grant Jeffrey comments in *The Signature of God*: "In this verse the Bible refers to the existence of springs of water flowing beneath the depths of the sea. It is only in the last thirty [now 50] years that underwater exploration of the ocean depths has revealed a remarkable phenomenon of numerous huge springs of fresh water pouring out of the ocean floor" (1996, pp. 119-120). Of course God, who

knew about them, had no difficulty reporting on them. Jeffrey further comments: "The Book of Job also contains questions that suggest a level of knowledge that would be impossible for a human writer living in the Middle East during ancient times. For example, Job refers to deep oceans whose surface waters are frozen hard like a stone...(Job 38:29-30). How could someone like Job, living in the area of Saudi Arabia in ancient times, have known about Arctic ice caps?" (p. 120).

Verses 31-32 present to us the star cluster known to the Greeks as the Pleiades and the constellations of Orion and the Great Bear, all mentioned earlier by Job (Job 9:9). It would seem from this that God intended the configuration of the stars to form connect-the-dot pictures in the sky. Verse 32 of Job 38 also mentions Mazzaroth, which is usually understood to mean "Constellations." The seasonal aspect in the same verse shows this to likely refer to what the Greeks named the Zodiac, probably replacing some of the original Zodiacal images with pagan, mythological figures. We should understand no astrological overtones in any of this, as God disapproves of astrology (compare Jeremiah 10:2). The stars exert no special power over human lives. The King James Version translation of verse 31, "...the *sweet influences* of Pleiades," is incorrect. The NKJV "cluster" is a much better translation (see *Expositor's*, footnote on verses 31-33). In verse 33, the ordinances of the heavens are probably the scientific laws that govern the movements of heavenly bodies—and these laws control the earth also. God then asks Job if he can, on his own, call down rain upon himself or send out lightning (verses 34-35). He further implies that Job could not even entertain such thoughts if someone had not given him a mind with which to imagine and consider (verse 36)—and that Someone, of course, is God. Yet the mind that God has given man is limited. For what person could ever figure out just how to properly regulate the earth's climate?

(compare verses 37-38). Even to modern scientists, the concept would be mind-boggling.

With all this, the Almighty Creator has only just begun his discourse. He has much more to say to Job, as we will see in the next few chapters. God next turns to the animal kingdom to illustrate His sovereignty and wisdom as Creator as well as His great care and concern for His creation.

God hunting prey for the lion and providing food for the raven (Job 38:39-41) could signal that God specifically intervenes in the natural realm to make sure animals are nourished. Or it could simply mean that God has set up the world's ecosystem in such a way to ensure that its creatures are regularly fed—that he has established an important balance in nature between predators and prey. Perhaps it means both—that God has established a self-perpetuating natural order but sometimes directly intervenes to make necessary adjustments due to the impact of other natural or unnatural circumstances. The portrayal of the young ravens crying out to God does not mean that they are consciously calling to Him—simply that they are crying out for relief and He is the One who hears them and can answer them.

Surely we can see that God is not only talking about ravens here. God's care for His creatures implies something else: that He must also have great care for His highest physical creatures—human beings. Job might as well have been hearing the words of Jesus Christ uttered more than 1,500 years later: "Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than birds?" (Luke 12:24)." [END]