

Day 75 - THURSDAY: January 19th

Job 40

Job 40:1-24 NKJV

Moreover the LORD answered Job, and said: "Shall the one who contends with the Almighty correct Him? He who rebukes God, let him answer it." Then Job answered the LORD and said: "Behold, I am vile; What shall I answer You? I lay my hand over my mouth. Once I have spoken, but I will not answer; Yes, twice, but I will proceed no further." Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said: "Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me: "Would you indeed annul My judgment? Would you condemn Me that you may be justified? Have you an arm like God? Or can you thunder with a voice like His? Then adorn yourself with majesty and splendor, And array yourself with glory and beauty. Disperse the rage of your wrath; Look on everyone who is proud, and humble him. Look on everyone who is proud, and bring him low; Tread down the wicked in their place. Hide them in the dust together, Bind their faces in hidden darkness. Then I will also confess to you That your own right hand can save you. "Look now at the behemoth, which I made along with you; He eats grass like an ox. See now, his strength is in his hips, And his power is in his stomach muscles. He moves his tail like a cedar; The sinews of his thighs are tightly knit. His bones are like beams of bronze, His ribs like bars of iron. He is the first of the ways of God; Only He who made him can bring near His sword. Surely the mountains yield food for him, And all the beasts of the field play there. He lies under the lotus trees, In a covert

of reeds and marsh. The lotus trees cover him with their shade; The willows by the brook surround him. Indeed the river may rage, Yet he is not disturbed; He is confident, though the Jordan gushes into his mouth, Though he takes it in his eyes, Or one pierces his nose with a snare.

Daily Deep Dive:

Here is today's reading from the UCG plan: "Then, after God's first long volley of evidence proving His vast wisdom and care for His creation, He calls on Job to respond (Job 40:1-2). "God reverses Job's accusation that God has brought a lawsuit against him (see Job 10:2 for the same Hebrew word). It really has been Job accusing God, not the other way around" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on Job 40:1-2). God gives an implicit reprimand to Job. Yet notice that it is not harsh, stern or even direct. God does not say, "Shame on you, wicked man. You are cursed for daring to rebuke Me." All He says is, "Okay, after all you've heard, are you still going to press your case against Me and try to correct Me? You who would presume to rebuke God, let's hear what you have to say now." Job is stunned and overwhelmed—probably at both the experience and at what God has said to him ending with this calling to account. What can he possibly say in response? All he can answer in verses 3-5 is that He is vile—worthless—and He covers his mouth, probably as a symbol of his unworthiness to say anymore. Job is humbled but, as we will see next, God still has more to say.

As we saw in Job 40:1-5, Job had come to see himself as nothing before the Great God and considered that he dared not say anymore. Yet this was not exactly God's point. God had been illustrating His great care for His creation (Job 38-39)—implying great care for Job as well. It seems

that Job, as stunned as he was at God's presence and reply, had not fully grasped this yet.

We should recall that Job had actually anticipated that if God ever confronted him, he would be unable to say anything or that, if he somehow managed to, it would not really matter. Note Job's earlier words from chapter 9: "How then can I answer Him, and choose my words to reason with Him? For though I were righteous, I could not answer Him; I would beg mercy of my Judge. *If I called and He answered me, I would not believe that He was listening to my voice.* For He crushes me with a tempest, and multiplies my wounds without cause.... If it is a matter of strength, indeed He is strong; and if of justice, who will appoint my day in court? Though I were righteous, my own mouth would condemn me; though I were blameless, it would prove me perverse" (verses 14-20).

So it is not enough that Job is silenced in God's presence. That is not the answer God is looking for—especially as Job may still be thinking along the same lines quoted above. God wants him to really think about all this and come to a reasoned conclusion. Job needs to come to some important realizations about God and himself. God therefore repeats His previous introduction from Job 38:3, saying that He is asking Job questions and that Job needs to give an appropriate response (Job 40:6-7).

God then moves to the heart of Job's problem, asking, "Would you indeed annul my judgment? Would you condemn me that you may be justified?" Again, we should observe that though this obviously constitutes a reprimand, God is extremely gentle here with Job, softly chiding him to bring him to his senses. As to substance, Job has certainly maligned God's justice in his agony-induced ranting, imagining that God oppresses innocents, laughs at their suffering and practically smiles on the wicked who harm the innocent (see Job 9:21-24; Job 10:3; Job 24:1-

12). We should recognize that due to his intense physical and emotional suffering, Job was in certain respects going out of his mind. Proper perspective and a good attitude are exceedingly hard to maintain in great trials. So God, in perfect empathy and understanding, is here to comfort Job, reason with him and help him to see reality.

In this vein, God issues a challenge to Job. In its note on Job 40:9-14, *The Nelson Study Bible* states: "The absurdity of Job's defiant criticism of the way the Lord runs the universe (see Job 29:2-17 for Job's claim to be fair in his judicial duties) is forcefully brought to his attention by God's ironic invitation to become 'king for a day' over the whole universe. If Job had the power, let him don the royal regalia of God's majestic attributes and humble the proud and wicked forces in the world. Job had criticized God for not doing this well enough (Job 21:30-31; Job 24:1-17)."

Basically God is saying to Job, "If you think you can do a better job of being God and Supreme Judge than Me, okay let's see it." And if Job can, then God will admit that Job can save himself (Job 40:14)—that is, that Job wouldn't even need God. Consider that Job has been seeking from God vindication and deliverance for himself and judgment on the wicked. Yet why would he seek this from an unfair and unjust God bent on harming him and rewarding evil? If Job's characterization of God in this regard is right, then Job's only option is to save himself—which is of course not really an option at all.

It seems that Job has had some self-righteousness in this regard. That is, he has in effect been trusting too much in his own character to serve as his vindicator. He had spoken of maintaining his integrity to the very end. He had imagined himself going before God and presenting his righteousness as the basis on which God should overturn His judgment—that is, the judgment Job incorrectly perceived God had brought on him. Recall that God said Job was without knowledge (Job 38:1-2). This

wording is interesting in light of the apostle Paul's evaluation of the people of Israel: "For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God" (Romans 10:2-3). The Israelites needed to throw themselves on God's mercy and look to Christ's sacrifice to justify them and His righteous life to save them. Job essentially needed to do the same thing.

Job's character and focus had served him well when affliction first came—indeed, remarkably so. But over time the immensity of his trial began to affect him severely—distorting his perspective of God. Job had probably never imagined that such a thing could happen to his thinking. Perhaps he was like Peter who said to Christ, "Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble" (Matthew 26:33). Peter was of course wrong. He needed to come to understand that of his own power and strength he would not be able to live up to his good intentions. Similarly, Job needed to see that his own righteousness was not self-perpetuating. He was, as all men are, subject to the dark forces of the world and the downward pull of his own mind. Righteous though he demonstrably was, he nevertheless desperately needed God to not merely declare him righteous, but to make and keep him righteous throughout his life. Job had been thinking just the opposite. He considered that God had only to recognize his righteousness. God in response says that if Job can fill His shoes as God, "...then I will also confess to you that your own right hand can save you" (Job 40:14). God goes on to provide examples of His sovereignty (and Job's lack) with two powerful creatures—the behemoth (verses 15-24) and Leviathan (Job 41:1-34). God's intent here is not the same as it was in chapters 38-39, where He was illustrating His care over the vast complexities of the natural realm. Rather, we should understand God's

present point in light of his challenge to Job to deal with the proud and wicked forces of the world. Only God can take down the behemoth (Job 40:19). And only He can subdue Leviathan, the king of the proud (see Job 41:34). We examine the specifics of these creatures in the comments that follow.

In Job 40:15, the untranslated Hebrew word *behemoth*, intensive in form, seems to have the meaning of "great beast" or "beast of beasts." It appears, from the description given, to be a literal creature that God has created. God says He made this animal with man (same verse). Its identity is disputed. Some reckon it to be the hippopotamus or the rhinoceros. Since these animals have small tails, those who advocate one of them argue that "tail like a cedar" must be a hyperbolic euphemism for the male member. Others maintain that the word refers to the trunk of an elephant. Of animals currently living, the African bull elephant would best seem to fit the description "first of the ways of God" (verse 19) since it is unquestionably the most powerful animal alive. Yet gulping river water into its open mouth (verse 23) seems to not fit the elephant, which sucks up water through its trunk and squirts it into its mouth. And there is no mention of tusks. If bringing the sword near in verse 19 is restricted to one-man sword combat, any of these animals full grown would have been rather hard to bring down. But even in Job's day men could hunt and kill these creatures with spears, especially in teams. All of this being so, it may well be that a much larger, now-extinct creature is intended. Some have suggested an herbivorous dinosaur. This would better fit a more literal meaning for "tail like a cedar" and make more sense of the creature's imperviousness to human attack. Such creatures inhabited the world that was destroyed before the creation of Adam. Yet it is possible that God made new varieties to live in man's world that have died out since the time of Job. Others have suggested the now-extinct giant hornless rhinoceros known as *Baluchitherium* (named

after Baluchistan in Pakistan, where its fossil remains were found). This massive animal, 25 feet long, standing 18 feet or nearly two stories high at the shoulder, with a thick, 8-foot-long tail, is thought to be the largest land mammal that ever lived. Paleontologists date the creature to more than 10 million years ago, yet this is based on an evolutionary interpretation of geologic strata. It could be that this animal was contemporary with human beings even as late as Job's day.

Verse 24 could be translated as a question: "Can one take him by his eyes or pierce his nose with a snare?" Recall that God had just implied that only He could bind the faces of the proud in secret (verses 11-13, KJV). Whatever creature the behemoth actually is, it is apparently used to represent the mighty and powerful of the earth. Here is a great force that Job is ultimately powerless to deal with. But God who made the creature is easily able to overcome it. It is interesting to consider that the great gentile empires of the earth and their leaders are later represented by powerful beasts in Bible prophecy (see Daniel 7; Revelation 13; Revelation 17). And God, the One who establishes earthly authority, is the One who is able to abase the world's powers, no matter how great they are (see Daniel 4).' [END]