

God Speaks: The Earth, The Sea, & The Weather

Job 38

For so long we have listened to the cries of Job and the counsel of four other men – Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, and Elihu. There have been ups and downs and a fair amount of monotony and repetition but now as we approach the end of the book we finally hear God speak. He has listened long enough and now will inform Job of his correct place in this predicament.

Before we get to the words of God there are a few interesting things that we must take note of.

1. God is going to speak from amongst the storm.

The English translation tells us that God answered Job from a whirlwind. Just prior to God speaking, Elihu had spent a great deal of time using the power of a storm as imagery while declaring the broad power, authority, and majesty of God. As mentioned earlier, I don't believe that it was simple imagery – I believe that Elihu was using the backdrop of an actual storm. It is out of this storm that God speaks to Job.

What does that look like?

The Hebrew word ((sah'-ar) is the word used here and it can mean the storm or the strong wind. That perhaps is where the English translation gets whirlwind. Certainly a strong wind in the midst of a storm can be a whirlwind. However, it may be a better understanding that God spoke out of this storm as opposed to envisioning a talking tornado - Just a thought.

Interestingly it does appear as there is a connotation of a tempest or wrath here. The idea being, that God isn't very happy and I believe it isn't difficult for us to understand that based on what He has to say.

2. Isn't it strange that God speaks from a storm?

Perhaps, but it does convey the image of power and perhaps wrath. Additionally, it should draw our minds back to Exodus 3 when God chooses to speak from the burning bush. While it may seem odd, it certainly isn't completely out of the character of God to speak in such a manner.

3. In what role has God come to speak?

It certainly appears that God has come to judge Job. In fact, that is exactly what Job had requested. He wanted a judge and it appears as though now he is getting what he has asked for. This certainly supports the presence of God in a storm. In Psalm 50 we are presented with a summary of what we see here in Job. God is the mighty one just as Elihu declared. He will not be silent, a storm rages around Him, and He will judge His people. There certainly seems to be some similarity between the characteristics of God listed in Psalm 50 and the book of Job.

4. God is faithful to speak

In his commentary, Matthew Henry states that *“Job had silenced his friends but not convinced them. Elihu had silenced Job, but had not brought him to admit his guilt before God. It pleased the Lord to interpose. The Lord in this discourse, humbles Job, and brings him to repent of his passionate expressions concerning God’s providential dealings with him.”* Personally, I love the phrase Henry uses that it *“pleased”* the Lord to interpose. God was faithful to step in and He did so in order to set the record straight for all parties involved so that they would be drawn back into a proper understanding of God and a proper relationship with Him. Even in his judgement, God desires to restore!

We don't have to wait long for God to speak – in verse 2 He begins and He gets straight to the point. What we are going to see in this chapter and in the ones that follow are several rhetorical questions. The implication is that God doesn't really give Job time to answer because He doesn't expect Job to answer. Why? Because the reality is that Job can't answer any of these questions. God is simply reminding Him of who He is and who Job is. You can get a sense of this immediately in verses 2 and 3.

God first asks who it is that darkens or obscures His counsel with ignorant words. In other words, God has always acted with a righteous purpose and Job (along with his three friends) has implied that God may have ulterior motives. At the very least, Job believes he could have been served better by God. Note that God calls this argument ignorant words and it is the ignorance of Job that God is going to point out.

At this point I believe it to be crucial that we understand the difference between ignorance and stupidity as I believe those words have a tendency to be used interchangeable and thus incorrectly in our day and age.

Stupidity implies knowledge that is misapplied while ignorance is a complete lack of knowledge. God states here that Job (and presumably his 3 friends) has acted out of ignorance – He doesn't know what God knows and He soon will make that point repeatedly.

In verse 3 God doubles down on this idea rather aggressively. He is going to demand answers from Job – answers that Job is incapable of providing – and thus God will prove His point rather emphatically. What we see specifically in what remains of chapters 38 and 39 are four rounds of questions.

I. First Round of Questions – The Earth and Sea (38:4-18)

The first round of questions that Job encounters from God concern the creation and sustaining of the Earth and the sea. The first question of this section that we see in verse 4 is one of the more famous passages from the entire book of Job. In fact, in my opinion it establishes one of the greatest points of the book. God asks Job, "Where were you when I established the earth?" In other words, where were you when creation took place – when I filled the formless and empty (Gen. 1:2)?

A couple of things should cause us to pause here. God is making it clear to Job right out of the gate that there are things that Job does not know or understand – he doesn't have first-hand knowledge and yet in some instances he has acted as though he does. God appears to be putting Job in his place here and He does so by asking a very big question. If Job cannot answer this large question, in many ways his argument is moot.

Job doesn't understand/know:

- The dimensions of the earth and how they were established (Why is it as big as it is?)
- How its foundations are supported
- How its cornerstone was laid (How the process of creation began)

Apart from God having completed it, the actual process of creation is a mystery to Job.

This very same thing should apply when we encounter the dangers and evils evolution and some other modern scientific theories about creation. Who was present at creation? The beginning of Genesis, the beginning of John's gospel, and Job 38:7 teach us that the the triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

were present along with the angels. That's it and yet as mankind we claim to understand how the Earth came to be about even though we were not there. There is only one way to know what happened at creation with certainty and that is to have a first-hand account and that is exactly what we have in the book of Genesis as we are told what happened and when it happened by the one who made it happen – the one who was present. It is foolish for us to claim knowledge that we do not possess and that is the same message that God is presenting to his servant Job.

Next, God moves to the seas. How many of you have been to the ocean and stood on the beach? What about a cruise ship in the middle of the ocean? How small does either of those situations make you feel? The oceans and seas are massive and yet God has them under complete control. He asks Job about the creation of the ocean – how did that happen – and about the boundaries of the seas. Specifically, God asks, “who enclosed the seas behind doors when it burst from the womb?” In other words, who caused it to be and who controlled where it went? How exactly did that happen? God tell Job in verse 11 that He simply declared “you may come this far, but no farther.” I believe that should call you to remembrance of Mark 4:39-40. Jesus and the disciples find themselves in a storm at sea and the disciples are literally scared for their life – “Don't you care that we are going to die?” and Jesus simply says to the storm “Silence, be still” and there was calm instantaneously. The bottom line is that God is in control and we are not – He alone has the ability to place boundaries on the seas or silence the storm. What Jesus said after this event is especially of interest. “Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?” In my mind, I can feel that statement woven behind the scenes in Job. God is putting Job in his place and at the same time calling on Job to understand that He is in control – there is no reason to fear.

In verse 14 and 15 we again read of God and his purpose. All of His creation reveals His glory – it has His stamp of approval on it. The analogy used here is that of clay and a seal. When pressed upon a ball of clay, the seal makes an impression and leaves a mark. God has done the same thing with what was formless and void – He has taken what was without beauty and made it beautiful – the hills stand out. You simply cannot look at creation and not see a creator.

In addition, it is all done with purpose. While it may not come about as we envision, God's creation, purpose, and plan is completely righteous and will bring the wicked their due and destroy all oppression. God doubles down on his questioning of this topic by essentially asking Job if He understands all of this and the simple answer is no – he is not capable. God controls the magnitude and the scope of the earth as well as the depths and boundaries of the seas. Interestingly we even see a mention of death in verse 17. “Have the gates of death been revealed to you?” Job simply knows that death is reality. We have heard him speak of it but he does not fully comprehend it or understand it as no man can. However, we should be called to remember that Christ himself not only was shown the gates of death but conquered death through His resurrection cementing the fact that God is in control of all things.

God again puts the emphasis on Job by calling asking him to claim understanding if he indeed has it. The reality is that he does not and cannot, because he is not God.

II. Second Round of Questions – The Weather (v.19-30)

In verse 19 we begin the second round of questions. Here God shifts the focus to the cycle of a day and the weather. Essentially, God asks Job if he understands how the days and nights work. Where does the daylight go – where is its home as well as the home of darkness. It is as if God is saying to Job – “you can orchestrate that, right? I mean, your number of days/age is very great.” Sarcastically God asks Job if he

was present before the first day. Obviously the answer is no, Job wasn't there nor can Job orchestrate the cycle of a day – It happens and he is powerless to start it, stop it, or control it in any way.

Next, God shifts to the weather and the storehouse of precipitation and wind. These things are not simply in existence when Job sees them. They are always in existence. God has them on hand in order to use them for His purposes. That is what He is telling Job and yet God calls on Job to explain how this process works – where these things are stored. For example, when the storm hits, where was all the hail that falls stored prior? More than likely this is not something that Job has even pondered. As humans, we deal with the weather as it happens but don't even begin to think about the processes that take place prior to the storm – we just deal with the reality of it in the moment.

God also mentions that he uses the weather for His own purposes. This is a very similar idea to the one that Elihu had previously shared. God tell Job that there is no coincidence. God can use the weather to bring rain where people don't live or where they do live. It can hinder battle, serve as judgment, or serve as blessing – ALL with a purpose. So not only can Job not control it – he certainly cannot control it with a purpose.

Although Job knows how magnificent God is, God expands on that by providing information as to just how great and magnificent He is – much larger than we could ever imagine.

III. The Third Round of Questions – The Heavens

The chapter ends with a third round of questioning from God that revolves around the heavens. God begins by mentioning the constellations. In other words, He is asking Job – “can you place the stars and move them as you wish? There are certain seasons in which they move – what do you know about that and how much control do you have over that?”

In addition, there are laws of heaven. While Job would not recognize them as they are named now, he most certainly would have understood what God was saying. There are rules put in place such as what we call the law of gravity. If Job were to throw a rock up, it would come down. Why is that so? The ultimate answer is because God declared it. That is the point He is making. Job has no authority of those laws. For some strange reason this questioning from God led me to think about space. Recently, several rich individuals began their quest to privatize space travel. Why? Deep down it is because of the magnificence of God – the beauty of His creation and the wonder of it all. At a certain altitude men and all objects experience weightlessness. Why? Because God declared it. Men can experience it but men cannot control it – only God can.

God has made His point and circles back around to the weather – He controls the clouds in the heavens and the lightening that comes from it as well. He asks Job, “Do they report to you: Here we are?”

I don't want to go as far as suggesting God is mocking Job but He certainly is making a point. God is the only one with supreme understanding and the only one in complete control of all things.

In these three rounds of questioning, God has made it very clear to Job that He has vast knowledge that Job does not and vast power that Job does not. Put simply, He is in complete control and it is inappropriate for Job or us to question His actions or motives.

Personal Implications

1. God is Faithful To Speak
2. God is in control of the details
3. God's limits work for good
4. God's power and knowledge should humble us
5. It is not our role to play God. It is our responsibility to trust Him.
6. Even in His judgment, God desires to restore.