

## 1-22-25 NOTES

### ***THE BOOK OF JOB***

***Job 38:1—40:24***

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As final proof that Elihu spoke with the *“breath of the Almighty,”* the Job writer uses to introduce the Lord, *“Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind”* (38:1). There is no break between the close of Elihu’s speech and the first words of the Lord—God immediately takes up where Elihu left off. And He goes on to build on base of truth that His forerunner had prepared.

As a matter of fact, none of us can speak for God, but all of us can prepare the way for Him to speak. Whether we are witnessing, teaching, counseling, or preaching, the test of truth is if there is natural movement from our words to the Word of God. The genuineness of what we say is not determined by the sound or choice of our words. It is not a pious tone of voice or the use of “religious language” that gives power to our witness. Instead, it is the presence of God in our words and life that frees us to be forerunners—preparers of the Way.

God’s appearance out of a whirlwind did not happen by accident. A whirlwind is part of the desert and yet it is not. No one can control its motion or capture its energy, as Jesus noted when He compared the new birth by the Spirit of God with the mystery of the winds, a whirlwind, which *“bloweth where it listeth [where it wants to], and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit”* (John 3:8).

Out of a whirlwind, God speaks to Job. What a difference between God’s appearance and Job’s expectations. Pride had caused Job to define the ground rules for a meeting with God. He had insisted that God appear as either prosecutor or defendant in a courtroom setting. Intentionally or not, Job had made himself equal with God—ready to ask or answer questions. He set the docket, laid out the conditions for the hearing with the demand that God answer the question, *“Why do I suffer?”*

Now God ignores Job’s arrogant demands. Rather than the orderly procedure of a courtroom, He comes in the swirl of a whirlwind. Rather than answering questions, He asks them. Rather than responding to Job’s demand, *“Why do I suffer?”* God chooses to ask the question, *“Who am I?”*

Without waiting for an immediate answer, the Lord presses on, and no language of Scripture touches the Eternal more than God’s rapid-fire questions to Job: *“Where*

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*were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?” (38:4). “Or who shut up the sea with doors . . .? (38:8). “Have you commanded the morning since your days, and caused the dayspring to know his place . . .?” (38:12). “Have you entered into the springs of the sea?” (38:16). “Where is the way where light dwells?” (38:19).*

God is not being cruel. But Job has forgotten who he is—a creature, not the Creator. He deserved to be squashed for his arrogance. But no, as Elihu told Job, God is very patient, coming to us time and time again in order to teach us His ways and save us from self-destruction. When God is finished with His questions, there is no doubt who He is—He and He alone is the Creator of the universe. God leaves Job speechless when He asks, ***“Knowest thou it, because thou wast born? [But you know all this because you were born at the creation] or because the number of the thy days is great? [and because you have lived so long]” (38:21).***

When there is no response from Job, God moves from His general creation to His special creation. His first questions were related to the subject of ***“who created the universe.”*** Now He asks, ***“Who controls the universe?”*** The questions refer to three kinds of special creation.

*First*, there are the elements that make up the natural environment—snow, hail, light, wind, water, thunderbolt, rain, dew, ice, and frost (38:22-30). In each case, God asks a question about the control of creation. He introduces these natural elements by asking Job, ***“Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow? Or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail, which I have reserved against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war?” (38:22-23).*** God purpose in asking these questions is not just to puncture the balloon of Job’s self-sufficiency. Instead, He wants to drive the point home that He alone is in control of His universe.

*Second*, God asks questions about the constellations in the heavens which control the seasons (38:31-38). Again, Job remains silent when God asks if he knows and understands the mysterious laws of the heavens which determine the cycle of the seasons.

Coming still closer to home, God’s *third* set of questions focuses on the animal world (38:39-39:30). Like a preview of Noah’s Ark, twelve different kinds of animals are paraded before Job’s eyes with questions that stagger the human mind. In this parade God speaks of the lion, raven, goat, deer, donkey, ox, ostrich, horse, locust, hawk, and eagle. And in describing this part of His creation, God points out that each is fearfully made and wonderfully different.

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God refers to the hunting strategy of lions, the random search of ravens, the birthtime of wild mountain goats, the scattering of young deer, the freedom of the wild donkey, the uncontrollable wild ox, the foolishness of the ostrich, the courage of the horse, the wisdom of the hawk, and the flight of the eagle.

Slowly, but surely, God is asking Job to trust Him. He may not be answering Job's question, ***"Why do I suffer?"*** but He is answering the larger and more important question, ***"Who am I?"*** God is doing more than putting Job in his place. By asking questions, even those that Job cannot answer, God shows that He respects the dignity and intelligence of His creation.

Now we see that Job is quick to understanding the fact that his question is not ***"Why?"*** but ***"Who?"*** And he is even quicker to learn that the issue is not understanding why he suffers but trusting in the One who will sustain him in his suffering. By knowing that God has created the universe, controls its forces, and cares for its creatures, Job is now ready to step up to a new level of trust.

Job accepts God's invitation to speak and gives this answer, ***"Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? [I am not fit or worthy to answer You]. I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer yea, twice; but I will proceed no further [I have spoken twice, but I won't speak again]"*** (40:4-5).

For the first time, Job confesses the sin of arrogance and then is silent. He is now ready to learn whatever God must teach him.

Out of the whirlwind, God speaks again. Job has confessed his pride. Every spiritual experience begins with such a confession. Jesus Himself announced His coming with the call to repent and believe the Good News. Only when we confess that we are sinners do we open ourselves to the redeeming grace of God. Anyone who tries to short-circuit the sequence from repentance to belief is guilty of communicating an easy faith that has no cross and needs no Christ.

Before the greatness of God, Job confessed his pride, which had been seen in his rush to question God's justice. He had demanded that God answer the question, ***"Why do I suffer?"*** on his own terms. And he had shown an arrogance that let him think he could enter the presence of God like a prince before the king. But now Job realizes that God is his Creator and his Guide.

Even with this new insight Job stills has questions, ***"Why am I singled out for suffering?"*** ***"Why am I afflicted with this kind of suffering?"*** ***"Why is my suffering***

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*so untimely?*” If we are honest, there are times when we, too, wonder whether there is a dark corner of the universe that is outside God’s understanding, power, or timing. With infinite patience, God now speaks to those questions.

In order to help Job understand, God now invites Job to reverse roles with Him and respond to his own questions. God wants Job to hear the way his questions sound to Him. And with that, God asks Job what he would do: would he **“disannul my [God’s] judgment? [Would he deny that God is just and fair?]”**. Would he condemn God, **“that thou mayest be righteous? [would Job say that God is wrong in order to be right himself?]”** . . . **“Hast thou an arm like God? Of canst thou thunder with a voice like him? [Do you question My power and refuse to hear My voice?]”** (40:8-9).

Then before responding to those questions God suggests that Job picture himself arrayed in all of God’s majesty and splendor, all the qualities of God’s character, and then **“cast abroad the rage of thy wrath [turn loose the full fury of your anger].”** **“Look on every one that is proud [humble the proud person]”** and **“tread down the wicked in their place [annihilate wicked people].”** **“Hide them in the dust together; and bind their faces in secret [bury them in a grave]”** (40:11-13). Then God adds that if Job can handle these kinds of situations and be wise, fair, gentle, and patient, it would be true that Job does not need God (40:14).

We must believe that Job was smart enough to get the point immediately. He realizes that in his arrogance he has tried to play God, and he sees that he is in way over his head. Job had been guilty of questioning God and of wanting to tell Him how and when things should be done. He placed his understanding of things on the same level with God’s. But now the Almighty is patiently trying to teach Job to trust Him. The wisdom writer gave us the formula for a rich and full life when he wrote, **“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding”** (Prov. 3:5).

God chose symbols as a means of speaking to Job’s questions. After the heavy weight of the argument in which Job and his friends were entangled, God chose the symbol of a behemoth or a hippopotamus to teach a lesson about His love. Think about it, the hippo is about the most unattractive and the most useless of all the animals of God’s creation. It is good for nothing, neither for meat nor skin or for work or play. Yet, God proudly claims the hippopotamus as a product of His creation (40:15-18).

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Then He goes on to tell Job how much He cares for the hippo, keeping him from danger, providing a source of food for him, and giving him a place for play with trees for shade and cool water for refreshment (40:19-22).

God had already spoken to Job about the wonders of His creation and the control and care of the animal kingdom. Now He adds new dimensions. First, God reminds Job that He created him along with the hippo (40:15). Second, He surprises Job with the news that the hippo ranks first among the works of God (40:19). He does not mean that Job is of lesser value than a hippo, but He does mean that He puts a priority on protecting the ugliest and most useless monstrosity of all His creation. Who can love a hippo? God does.

One of the warning signs of spiritual pride is taking yourself too seriously. Over the years, I have learned that a sense of humor goes hand in hand with the spirit of holiness. People who have forgotten how to laugh at themselves and with others are miserable company. I heard a preacher say, “If Satan cannot keep us from being righteous, he will try to make us self-righteous.”

Job, the epitome of righteousness, had fallen into the trap of self-righteousness. So, God shows him how much He loves a hippopotamus to get things into perspective and to get Job laughing again. Just as the hippo may be the most ridiculous of God’s creation, Job’s self-righteousness is ridiculous and a laughing matter. Self-righteousness is like a clown—sad and laughing at the same time.

Job, the creature, had taken on the air of the Creator; a man had assumed he was equal with God; and a sinner had dared to imply that he could save himself. Basically, Job had drawn God in his own image.

God now presses home His point in asking Job to look at the hippopotamus, and He next says, “*Behold, he drinketh up a river, and hasteth not [if the river is flooded, he isn’t concerned]: he trusteth that he can draw up the Jordan into his mouth [if the Jordan is rushing high, he remains calm]. He taketh it with his eyes: his nose pierceth through snares [can he be captured by the eyes or be caught in a trap by his nose?]*” (40:23-24).

As unattractive as the hippo may be, he is a model of simple trust. Though the Jordan River, the symbol of death, rushes over him, he holds his confidence in the Creator. Even if his nose is pierced by a snare, the symbol of suffering, his trust does not waver. Beyond any doubt, Job’s self-sufficiency is being shamed by a picture of a hippopotamus who trusts God. 01/22/25