

The Enormity of God Part One - Job 38:1 – 40:5
James Muldoon – Carey Baptist Church – 1 June 2008

Job is a righteous man who is suffering. His friends believe that God is punishing him for being a disgusting sinner. But Job has been looking for vindication. “I’m innocent!” he cries in chapter after chapter. “God is denying me justice! Why doesn’t he face me and tell me what he’s doing?” And in this morning’s passage God comes and speaks to him!

God comes as a rather threatening presence in **38:1**. He comes speaking grand words from the midst of a tempest. And from his very first words in **38:2-3**, we realise that it’s not Job asking the questions; it’s God! All of God’s questions demonstrate two things. Firstly (and most importantly), he’s demonstrating his own greatness. Secondly, he’s demonstrating Job’s smallness. For example in **38:4-7**, his words amount to this: “You didn’t lay the earth’s foundations, did you, Job? No, I did! You didn’t measure it all out, did you, Job? No, I did! You didn’t make the angels sing for joy, did you, Job? No, I did!” God is showing his own greatness and Job’s smallness. He’s not doing it unkindly. But he is putting Job in his place.

And so all the way through **Job 38 - 39**, the Lord quizzes Job. There are almost fifty questions which point out ten features of the natural world and nine species of animal. How, then, does the Lord’s natural history lesson help Job in his suffering? His words have a bearing on suffering in four ways.

i God is greater than Job realises

Human wisdom has failed. Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, Elihu and even Job himself have had too small a view of God. So God labours the point that he is greater than they realise. He stresses that he is in control and that he knows what he’s doing. So: he controls the sea (**38:8-11**); he keeps the world’s cycles working as they should (**38:12-15**); he controls the furthest extremities of the world (**38:16-18**); he controls what happens in the desert (**38:25-27**); he controls the weather (**38:28-30**); he holds the stars in place (**38:31-33**); he makes wild animals serve his purposes (**38:39-41** and all of **Job 39!**). And it’s reassuring to know that.

It’s when people suffer that they forget it. What if you’re ill? What if you’ve lost someone? It’s at times like those that you will ask, “Is God in control? Does He know what He’s doing?” And that’s why the Lord labours the point so much that he is greater than Job realises. He is in control. And he does know what he’s doing.

If you’re suffering, cling to this. God is greater than you realise. He is in control and he knows what he’s doing, even if you don’t. Your suffering is part of some great plan. He does have some purpose behind it. And his designs for you in it all are for good.

ii God is personal and caring towards Job

In **38:1** God is called, “The Lord”, or in Hebrew, “Yahweh”. Yahweh is, of course, the covenant name of God which he revealed to Moses when he met him at the burning bush in Exodus 3. It shows God to be the self-existent one, the one who is. But for the old covenant Israelites from that moment on, it also stressed the relationship which God had with his people. Yahweh was their personal, caring God.

The name Yahweh has not been used much in Job and that's what makes it significant here. Job's friends have painted a picture of God as a God of distance, a God of detachment. The use of the name Yahweh here, though, draws attention to the fact that the Lord is in relationship with Job. He is personal and caring. God's care for the animals in **Job 39** stresses the same thing too.

Job, then, can trust God. If God is Yahweh, if God is in a relationship with him, if God is personal, if God is caring, then Job can trust him. And Job can trust him even when his questions go unanswered. That's important because his questions do go unanswered!

You may have many questions going through your mind, things which you struggle to understand. Remember that God is personal and caring. You know that better than Job. By faith, you can see God the Son made man, dying on the cross. It was for you he died, Christian. He's that personal, that caring. You can trust him. You can trust him even with your unanswered questions. And if you're not a Christian you must trust him to save you from your sin.

iii God gives Job a new perspective

God gives Job a new perspective on life: he teaches him that the world does not revolve around him. **38:25-27** illustrates it: God is interested about grass growing in the desert. **Job 39** also illustrates it: most of the animals mentioned are mysterious or even hostile to mankind. The world does not revolve around us.

The Lord turns Job away from himself. He says, in effect, "Look! The world does not revolve around you, Job. You are infinitely precious to Me. But you are not the only thing in the world. Look at the grass in the desert: I'm interested in that! Look at the wild ox and the ostrich: I care about them! Take your eyes off yourself, Job. The world does not revolve around you."

This is a lesson which all Christians need to learn. The world does not revolve around us. We need to take our eyes off ourselves and live 100% for Jesus Christ. We won't be properly prepared for suffering if we don't.

iv God speaks to Job

For Job, the fact that God speaks is almost as important as what God says. All the way through, Job has been crying out for God to speak to him. For thirty-five chapters there's been silence. But now God speaks. For Job, that makes it all right. And that's been the experience of so many of God's people over the years. They've suffered. They've suffered terribly. It hasn't been God's will to deliver them from their suffering. But they've known God speaking to them. And it's meant the world to them.

Sometimes God speaks through a passage of Scripture. Sometimes he simply speaks in the reassuring way of a father comforting a child: we're just aware of the Lord with us and whispering words of comfort, words of exhortation, words of courage, into our hearts. In our suffering, God speaks. And in a curious way, it makes it all worth while. That was what happened with Job. And it's happened to so many of God's people since his day. How wonderful: God speaks to us in our suffering.