

JOB 40:1-14 POWER DISPLAYED - God's Wisdom and Power Are Unfathomable.

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Things would be different if we were in charge. We may have cried when a sibling got what we thought to be better treatment as we called into question the fairness of mom or dad. They may have let us know that we would be free to make that decision once we were parents, but that for right now, they were the parents and we were not. We may even accuse God of being unfair because of life's situations. Job raised this issue, and God responded by reminding Job of His credentials.

What qualifies a person to be in charge? What credentials might a person need to be in charge of your family?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

JOB 38:1–41:34

Finally, God responded to Job. He had the final word. God's response served to correct the speculations and flawed statements Job and his friends had uttered because of their limited human perspectives. Job 38:1–41:34 contains God's two speeches which are divided by Job's first response in Job 40:3-5.

God's first address to Job focused on God as the Creator and His sustaining power and dominion over all creation. His question in Job 38:2 summarizes His first response to Job: "Who is this that obscures my plans with words without knowledge?" Job had demonstrated his ignorance when he supposed he could question God's justice or His ways. God focused on His work of creation, and with a battery of questions He pointed out that Job was not present when He created everything (38:4), that Job did not understand these things (38:21,33), and that Job had no power over any of these things (38:31-32,35). God emphasized His power over every creature and over all of nature. He not only set them in place, but He also ordered how they were to function in His creation. God provides for and sustains His creation. It all answers to Him. God knows everything about every intricate part of His creation. What did Job know about any of these things? What contribution had Job made to any of these things?

God's second discourse focused on two powerful creatures, one on land called "Behemoth" and the other in the sea called "Leviathan." Some scholars have suggested that Behemoth was a hippopotamus. God described Behemoth as an herbivore that inhabited areas around water, had powerful muscles, a firm rigid tail, legs like iron, and was unassailable (40:15-19). God described Leviathan as some kind of formidable reptile (41:1-34). God's power over these extraordinary creatures served as examples of God's omnipotence over all of His creation.

As you read Job 40:1-14, identify the requirements for Job to instruct God. Why it is essential for us to realize only God has the wisdom and power to rule His creation?

EXPLORE THE TEXT

CORRECT ME? (JOB 40:1-5)

V. 1 The Lord said to Job: **V. 2** “Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him? Let him who accuses God answer him!” **V. 3** Then Job answered the Lord: **V. 4** “I am unworthy—how can I reply to you? I put my hand over my mouth. **V. 5** I spoke once, but I have no answer— twice, but I will say no more.”

VERSES 1-2

The statement of verse 1 is very significant: The Lord said to Job. It is noteworthy because Job had claimed God ignored him and would not answer him (30:20). Job not only claimed God would not answer Him, but he also accused God of having wronged him and that when he cried out to God he could find no justice (19:6-7). The fact that God answered Job demonstrated Job was wrong about God in these matters. God’s wisdom and power are beyond anything Job could have comprehended or imagined.

In his earlier dialogues with his friends, Job came very close to sounding like them by suggesting he had a deep knowledge of God and how God conducts Himself and His affairs. However, from the very beginning, the Book of Job clearly indicates Job did not know everything about God’s affairs. Job was ignorant of the meetings and exchanges between God and Satan. Job had no clue about what precipitated the events that transpired as a result of those conversations. From the start, the narrative establishes that even the most righteous of men had a limited knowledge and understanding of God.

God asked if the one who had accused Him of wrongdoing was ready to make his argument against the Almighty. But first, God said, “Job, if you are going to criticize Me, then you must first answer My questions.”

In chapters 38–39, God had commenced His response to Job by issuing a battery of questions to Job concerning his wisdom and power compared to God’s wisdom and power over all of His creation. After giving Job the opportunity to regain a clearer perspective by reminding Job that God is God and Job is not, God said, “Job, if you believe yourself to be qualified to correct Me, demonstrate you are qualified by answering the questions I have posed.” God asked Job if he could rule over creation better than God had been able to. The message was this: who was Job to challenge God’s wisdom and power?

What are some ways in which people might subtly question or underestimate God’s ability or character?

VERSES 3-5

Verses 3-5 provided Job’s initial response to God by making one recognition, one admission, and one declaration. Job recognized he was unworthy compared to God’s glory manifested in His rule over creation. Therefore, Job admitted that he, the creature, was unable to instruct or correct the Creator. Furthermore, in a gesture of respect and submission Job placed his hand over his mouth.

Job continued his response to God by using an ancient Near Eastern idiom that means, “I have spoken once too many times already” or “I have already said too much.” Thus, Job declared he had nothing more to say. It was the declaration of one whom God had humbled.

However, we should note that Job did not mention repentance. God had gotten Job’s attention and was graciously correcting Job’s perspective. Nevertheless, Job needed to hear more from God before he came to the full realization of his need to repent of the mistaken things he had said about God (42:6). So God had more to say in the following verses. It was God’s grace that humbled Job, and it would be God’s grace that would finally lead Job to repentance. A humble heart is the fertile soil where God plants the seeds of grace that produce an even greater grace of restoration and rejoicing.

Why are people prone to question God’s justice and fairness?

KEY DOCTRINE: God

God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures (Jer. 32:27).

QUESTION MY JUSTICE? (JOB 40:6-9)

V. 6 Then the Lord spoke to Job out of the storm: V. 7 “Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. V. 8 “Would you discredit my justice? Would you condemn me to justify yourself? V. 9 Do you have an arm like God’s, and can your voice thunder like his?

VERSE 6

In Scripture, God communicated to people in a variety of ways: through a burning bush to Moses (Ex. 3:1-4), through a fleece to Gideon (Judg. 6:37-40), in a still small voice to Elijah (1 Kings 19:12), and through a donkey to Balaam (Num. 22:22-30). In this instance, just as He initially did in Job 38:1, God replied to Job from the midst of a tornadic storm. Job needed to witness God’s power firsthand.

DID YOU KNOW?

A physical manifestation or appearance of God is called a theophany. Theophanies in the Old Testament are often associated with the wind (Job 40:6; Ezek. 1:4). Other forms of theophanies included the burning bush (Ex. 3:2–4:17), a cloud (Ex. 16:10), visions (Isa. 6), and in human form (Gen. 32:30; Ex. 24:10).

In light of God’s power, Job needed to fully accept his weakness and powerlessness, not only physically but intellectually and spiritually. Furthermore, Job needed to see God’s power and His ability to act on Job’s behalf. Only God could deliver him. Job needed more than an explanation from God; he needed a manifestation of God. Consequently, God would reveal His wisdom not only through what He said but in how He would say it. It is reminiscent of how God has spoken to all of humanity in desperate need of a Savior. Hebrews 1:1-3 indicates God has spoken to us and revealed Himself through His Son through whom “He made the universe,” who is “the radiance of God’s glory,” and is “sustaining all things by his powerful word.” Our God has revealed to us that He is mighty to save through the person and work of Jesus Christ.

VERSES 7-9

As God had already done when He initially responded to Job, He once again instructed Job to prepare himself to answer more questions. (See 38:3.) Again, God demanded that Job answer Him in response to His questions. Soon after Satan had struck Job, Job was demanding answers from God. God turned the tables and demanded answers from Job.

How does God confront people today who question Him? How does that compare to the way God confronted Job?

The Book of Job began with the matter between God and Satan. Satan questioned God's worth and glory by saying that the only reason the most righteous of God's children worship Him is because of what they can get from God. The material things and physical health God provides for them is their only motive for their loyalty to God. Take those things away, and they will curse God and turn away. God took up the challenge by using the life of His servant Job. God allowed Satan to strike Job, and in so doing God used Job to silence Satan and bring glory to Himself.

From these events another matter integral to the message of the Book of Job arises as a new challenge against God. In verse 8 this challenge was made clear as God accused Job of denying that God is just. In other words, Job declared that what God does is not right. Job 9:22-24 is one example of Job's accusation against God (also see 6:29; 27:1-6).

Why did Job challenge God's justice? It was so he could vindicate himself and prove his own innocence. It was true that Job was innocent. Job's problem was in how he sought to vindicate himself. He suggested that somehow God was at fault for all of his adversities. Thus, God's rhetorical question: Would you condemn me to justify yourself? It is odd that we, a corrupted people, are often so ready to question God's justice when in truth our only notion of what justice is comes from God.

In the ancient Near East, arm was an idiom people used to speak of strength. Kings would speak of stretching out their arms against their enemies. In verse 9, God asked Job if he had the strength to do what God could do. Job must learn that it is only God's strong arm that can rule, rescue, and restore. Could Job's voice thunder like God's and instill fear and dread on those who heard it? This is a vivid picture reminiscent of God before the Israelites on Mount Sinai just before giving the Ten Commandments (Ex. 19:16-19). The tone of God's questions to Job were cutting, but they were not of the brutish sort. Rather, they were the cuts of a surgeon intricately removing malignant growths for the purpose of healing and restoration.

How is questioning God's justice the same as placing one's self as equal to or greater than God? Why is questioning God's omnipotence evidence of a limited or diminished perspective of God?

SAVE YOURSELF? (JOB 40:10-14)

V. 10 Then adorn yourself with glory and splendor, and clothe yourself in honor and majesty. V. 11 Unleash the fury of your wrath, look at all who are proud and bring them low, V. 12 look at all who are proud and humble them, crush the wicked where they stand. V. 13 Bury them all in the dust together; shroud their faces in the grave. V. 14 Then I myself will admit to you that your own right hand can save you.

VERSES 10-14

These five verses contain ten commands God gave to Job. Altogether, they direct Job to assume his throne as the ruler of the universe and demonstrate that he can be as powerful as God and more just than God. If Job was going to talk like he could rule better than God, then he should make sure to look the part.

Verses 11-13 convey one idea. Was Job equal to the task of executing justice in the universe? Job had been looking for proof of God's justice, so God challenged Job to show Him what justice looks like in the universe. While Job never claimed he could be a better ruler over creation than what God is, God's battery of commands served to remind Job that he needed to put his complete trust in God to do what is right. Instead of complaining, Job needed to be more trusting of God without demanding explanations from God. Our complaining to God implies we are capable of proposing better ways for God to run things in this universe. It is not unlike Satan, who believes he can usurp God.

In verse 14, God concluded by saying that if Job could do everything God supposedly had been neglecting to do in verses 10-13, then He would congratulate Job and concede that by his own strength Job could save himself with no need for God. God would see Job as an equal who was entitled to argue with God. However, if Job could not do these things, then he really did not know what he had been talking about. Furthermore, by implication, the God who ruled over Job in wisdom and power was Job's only hope of salvation.

BIBLE SKILL: Compare similar passages.

Compare the exchanges between God and Job with the exchanges between God and other people. Review Genesis 3:8-19; 1 Kings 19:9-18; and Jonah 4:9-11. How was each conversation God's response to a challenge to His justice or power? How does the response given to Adam, Eve, Elijah, and Jonah compare to the response given to Job? What can we learn about God from these conversations?

APPLY THE TEXT

Believers can be assured that God knows more about them and their circumstances.

Believers must be careful to avoid viewing God as unfair and unjust.

Only God has the wisdom and power to rule His creation.

Share with the group ways God has demonstrated to you His faithfulness and wisdom in the past. How does knowing God has been trustworthy in the past assure you about your circumstances today?

Examine your life for ways you view God as unfair or unjust. Confess your lack of trust in God to Him and ask Him to strengthen your trust in Him.

How have the challenges you currently face revealed your need to trust God? Thank Him for being the all-wise God and commit to continue to trust Him.