

## Out of the Whirlwind, Part 2

### Grappling with God: The Gospel According to Job, Part 12

Job 40:6 – 42:6

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Take a Bible and turn to Job 40. We will be looking at Job 40 through the beginning of 42. As you are turning there, I would like you to think about how you would answer if someone asked you the question, “Is it ever okay to be angry with God?” That theme has come up a few different times in Job. Is it ever okay? Is it ever permissible? Is it ever best? Is it ever right to be angry with God?

I read an article this week by a Christian who has gone through a difficult trial. The article was written about a year ago, but this was the first time I have read it. He described some of his circumstances and the article was written on the topic of anger with God. Here is what he said: “But God has chosen to devastate my life like an eruption devastates a volcano and this frustrates me. It makes me angry that He took my mom in a car accident nine months ago. I resent the feeling of disconnect from God that I have. I can’t sleep well. It’s hard to concentrate on work.”

He went on to say, “Many heroes of the faith also felt and expressed their anger at God. Job did so without sinning.”

Maybe we have felt some similar things this writer has written when circumstances, tragedy or suffering enters our lives and it feels to us like happiness is only something of the past or something we will remember and not something we will experience. We are left trying to reconcile our faith with our experiences and anger begins to rise up in us.

Last time I preached, we talked about how Job’s despair was brought on because God was not acting the way Job thought that He should. Maybe you have been there and felt like saying, “God, this isn’t fair.” And your anger begins to rise.

Is that good? Is it appropriate? Is it right? Or is it wrong, sinful pride? If we took a vote there would probably be different votes cast. Some would quickly say, “No, it’s never right to be angry with God.” Some would say, “Yes, it is.” And some would say, “Well, maybe it depends on what you mean by ‘anger.’”

Let's come back to that question. I think our passage deals with this and corrects what the article writer was saying when he wrote, "Job did so without sinning." The passage we're looking at today is about when God confronted Job and Job repented of his sin. So Job did not respond without sin, but let's get into that and see what our text says.

## Two Main Questions

Look at Job 40, beginning at verse six. It says, "*Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said: 'Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me.'*" This sounds similar to the last speech from God in chapter 38. But here He asked a different question to Job. He said, "Will you ever put Me in the wrong? Will you condemn Me that you may be in the right?"

Those two questions God asked Job are going to set the theme for what I think these next two chapters are about. God confronted Job with these questions: "Will you put Me in the wrong? Will you, the creature, question the Creator and say that I am the One Who is wrong? Will you condemn Me so that you may be right?" Job's friends were saying, "Your suffering must have been brought on by your sin, so God is punishing you for that." In Job's defense of himself, he crossed lines to say, "God has not been just in what He's doing. I don't deserve this." So he doubted God's sovereign goodness by accusing Him of injustice. "Will you condemn Me," God said, "that you may be in the right?"

In 13:23b-24, Job said, "*Make me know my transgression and my sin. Why do you hide your face and count me as your enemy?*" So he pleaded with God, "Tell me why I deserve this, God. Make me know my sin that has caused this. Why are You hiding Your face from me?"

In chapter 23, Job demanded an audience with God, saying, "I wish that I could find God, that I might come to His seat and lay my case before Him." He wanted to appear before God and say, "Here is what I have done and here is why I don't deserve what You have done to me."

Beginning in 40:9, Job did have an audience with God. God did speak to Job but He did not say, "Here is why I was doing what I was doing. Here is what happened. Satan came to Me and asked..." He did not explain all that. Here is the way He responded to Job in verses nine and ten: "*Have you an arm like God, and can you thunder with a voice like his? Adorn yourself with majesty and dignity; clothe yourself with glory and splendor.*"

In other words, God said, “Job, if you think that you would be a better God, then do it. Adorn yourself and clothe yourself with majesty and dignity.” He went on to tell Job, “Imagine, Job, if you were responsible for bringing about justice here on this earth.”

In verses 11-14, God said:

*Pour out the overflowings of your anger, and look on everyone who is proud and abase him. Look on everyone who is proud and bring him low and tread down the wicked where they stand. Hide them all in the dust together; bind their faces in the world below. Then will I also acknowledge to you that your own right hand can save you.*

God was not saying, “Job, this is tough. You try it if you think you can do better. Give it a shot. You would mess up, too.” That was not God’s approach to Job. He said, “Job, imagine yourself thinking that you know what is fair and what is just. Let Me see you, the one who is complaining and bringing these accusations, accomplish justice on this earth and bring the proud low, punish the wicked and exalt the good.”

Then God brought up two beasts. In 40:15, He mentioned behemoth and in 41 He mentioned leviathan. God had already taken Job through this picture of the universe, and Job responded in silence. Then God addressed this area of evil: “Job, can you rule over this world? Can you rule over evil?” He brought out these two beasts to describe before Job and asked some more questions. “Can you control them?”

These two beasts have different interpretations and there are probably some who would say, “These are physical creatures that either exist today or existed at some time in the past.” Others would say, “I think these are more mythical creatures or pictures of the supernatural—of evil, chaos or Satan.”

Before we get into this deeper, I want to back up and explain this from a larger perspective. The first interpretation is that these animals exist today. Some look at behemoth and say, “This must be a hippopotamus or something similar to that.” The word “behemoth” just means “beasts.” As you look at what is described here, a hippopotamus may be close. The text also talks about leviathan with teeth and armor on his back, so maybe it is a crocodile.

Others point to these beasts and say, “No, I see some things in here that sound more like dinosaurs.” Therefore, this behemoth may be some kind of dinosaur that has a long tail because it says his tail was like a cedar tree. Others point out that leviathan is described as breathing fire, so maybe this was some kind of dinosaur or dragon that could breathe fire.

Others say these are mythical gods or creatures that existed and represented chaos, death, evil and Satan. Sometimes you see pictures where leviathan is mentioned as being a seven-headed serpent. It is a picture of everything chaotic and evil represented by the serpent, the dragon or Satan.

### **A Review of God's Purpose in Job**

Those are some of the different interpretations and I think the best way for us to see what God did by describing these creatures is to back up and remember what happened in the book of Job up to this point. What was happening? What was God's purpose in bringing out these creatures? After we answer these questions, we will return and look at what these creatures were.

The first chapter and a half of Job was the main narrative—the main story—of what you think of when you think of Job. Job was a righteous man. He was loved by God and he loved God. He was prosperous. Then you have this scene in heaven where Satan came and said, “I want to tempt him and bring suffering into his life. I know that when I take from him everything You have given him, God, he will turn on You.” So God gave Satan permission to do just that and Job began losing things. He lost his family and possessions. Then Satan went back to God and said, “But you didn't let me attack him. Let me bring physical suffering into his life and then he will turn on You.” So God said, “As long as you do not kill him, you can.” Then Satan afflicted Job with sickness, boils and physical suffering. Do you remember how Job responded at the end of chapter one? He said, “The Lord gives. The Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.”

Then what you have is about 36½ chapters of dialogue, as Job and his friends debated about why these trials came. His friends circled around and around, saying, “It's because of sin in your life, Job. You need to repent of something. We do not really know what it is, but you need to repent of something. Then God will bless you again.” Job dug in his heels and said, “I know this is not God's wrath. This is not because of sin. I am not facing this due to punishment.” So Job refused to repent. That concept cycled through a few times. We had several messages on how to think about suffering and how to counsel others who are going through suffering.

Last week, we began hearing from God in chapter 38. Let's skim over what we looked at last week when David preached. In chapter 38, God answered Job out of the whirlwind and said, “*Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?*” In other words, “Who

are you, Job, to ask questions and think that you have wisdom when you really don't even know what you're talking about?"

God went on to describe the creation—the world that He made. Look at verse four, where He said, *"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?"* Jump down to verse 31. God said, *"Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades or loose the cords of Orion?"* God showed Job creation and said, "Job, do you think you can control these things? Do you think you brought these things into existence?" He then described the different animals in the animal kingdom, saying, "Job, I'm the One Who is responsible for these. I am the One Who takes care of these."

Then in 40:1, it says, *"And the LORD said to Job: 'Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty?'"* Look at verse three. *"Then Job answered the LORD and said: 'Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer you? I lay my hand on my mouth. I have spoken once, and I will not answer; twice, but I will proceed no further.'"* What happened up to this point is Job said, "Okay, You are right. I need to be quiet. I need to be silent." As God took Job through the universe and said, "This is Who I am, Job, and You're questioning Me?"

Again, before we jump into our text, let's just look at the end of our text. Look at 42:1-6. What God said to Job in this second speech brought this kind of response from Job. It says:

*Then Job answered the LORD and said: "I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. 'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. 'Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you make it known to me.' I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes."*

In chapter one, it said, "In all of this, Job did not charge God." Do you remember that? *"In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong."* However, in this passage, we see this is the very thing of which God accused Job and of which Job repented. In the beginning of the trial, Job responded rightly, but, at some point in the midst of his trial, Job crossed the line when he charged God with wrong and injustice.

When God said to Job in the first speech, "Look at this universe. Look at everything that I have made. Look at the stars. Look at the sun. Look at the weather. Look at the way I rule over the animal kingdom," Job was silent. But now what He said in this second speech caused Job to say, "I didn't know You before, God. I heard You, but now I see You."

What God said to Job in the second speech opened Job's eyes to where he didn't just say, "I need to be quiet." He repented and said, "Now I know God and I know that no purpose of His can be thwarted."

So let's read what God said to Job in chapter 40, beginning at verse 15. This is a long reading that I am going to do in the middle of this sermon. I want us to hear what Job heard. I want us to hear how God described these two beasts. It is difficult sometimes to listen to long passages of Scripture, but we I know we can do it. We need to work hard together and focus in on this. Imagine yourself hearing these words from God because that is precisely what we are doing.

Verse 15 says:

*Behold, Behemoth, which I made as I made you; he eats grass like an ox. Behold, his strength in his loins, and his power in the muscles of his belly. He makes his tail stiff like a cedar; the sinews of his thighs are knit together. His bones are tubes of bronze, his limbs like bars of iron.*

*He is the first of the works of God; let him who made him bring near his sword! For the mountains yield food for him where all the wild beasts play. Under the lotus plants he lies, in the shelter of the reeds and in the marsh. For his shade the lotus trees cover him; the willows of the brook surround him. Behold, if the river is turbulent he is not frightened; he is confident though Jordan rushes against his mouth. Can one take him by his eyes, or pierce his nose with a snare?*

God described this beast and the question He asked Job was, "Can you control him? Could you take him by the eyes or pierce his nose with a snare?"

Now, we will hear the longer description of leviathan:

*Can you draw out Leviathan with a fishhook or press down his tongue with a cord? [You can hear the way these questions were meant to evoke thought, almost in a mocking way. The answer is, "No."] Can you put a rope in his nose or pierce his jaw with a hook? Will he make many pleas to you? Will he speak to you soft words? Will he make a covenant with you to take him for your servant forever? Will you play with him as with a bird, or will you put him on a leash for your girls? Will traders bargain over him? Will they divide him up among the merchants? Can you fill his skin with harpoons or his head with fishing spears? Lay your hands on him; remember the battle—you will not do it again! Behold, the hope of a*

*man is false; he is laid low even at the sight of him. No one is so fierce that he dares to stir him up. Who then is he who can stand before me? Who has first given to me, that I should repay him? Whatever is under the whole heaven is mine.*

*I will not keep silence concerning his limbs, or his mighty strength, or his goodly frame. Who can strip off his outer garment? Who would come near him with a bridle? Who can open the doors of his face? Around his teeth is terror. His back is made of rows of shields, shut up closely as with a seal. One is so near to another that no air can come between them. They are joined one to another; they clasp each other and cannot be separated. His sneezings flash forth light, and his eyes are like the eyelids of the dawn. Out of his mouth go flaming torches; sparks of fire leap forth. Out of his nostrils comes forth smoke, as from a boiling pot and burning rushes. His breath kindles coals, and a flame comes forth from his mouth. In his neck abides strength, and terror dances before him. The folds of his flesh stick together, firmly cast on him and immovable. His heart is hard as a stone, hard as the lower millstone. When he raises himself up the mighty are afraid; at the crashing they are beside themselves. Though the sword reaches him, it does not avail, nor the spear, the dart, or the javelin. He counts iron as straw, and bronze as rotten wood. The arrow cannot make him flee; for him sling stones are turned to stubble. Clubs are counted as stubble; he laughs at the rattle of javelins. His underparts are like sharp potsherds; he spreads himself like a threshing sledge on the mire. He makes the deep boil like a pot; he makes the sea like a pot of ointment. Behind him he leaves a shining wake; one would think the deep to be white-haired. On earth there is not his like, a creature without fear. He sees everything that is high; he is king over all the sons of pride.*

As we read through this, remember that God already showed Job the animals, the stars and space and all these things. Think about how Job responded—in silence. And now God brought up at the beginning, “Job do you think you can administer justice over this evil world?” And then He brought out these two beasts and Job responded much more severely, saying, “I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted... I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you.”

I do not think this was a visual revelation Job had, as God spoke to Him out of the storm, out of the whirlwind. Job now responds with, “I have seen You with my eyes. Now, God, I

understand You more. I see You as God over this whole universe.” I think it points us to see these two creatures as something beyond just some mere animals or even grander animals.

### **Behemoth and Leviathan: Beyond the Physical**

Christopher Ash and Robert Fyall wrote commentaries I’ve read that pointed to this being beyond just the physical. God moved supernaturally and there are four reasons I want to go through to help us understand what God said here.

The first reason is that neither creature fits perfectly with any known creature on earth. If this was the only reason then we could explain them with hyperbole and God’s using poetic language here to describe these animals. But if it is a hippopotamus, a crocodile, or even some sort of dinosaur, none of these animals perfectly line up with the descriptions that are here.

Second, it is hard to see how Job’s inability to catch and tame a hippo and a crocodile really addresses his inability to administer cosmic justice. First of all, people could capture those things, so Job could say, “Well, yeah, it’s difficult, but it could be done.” But even then, if we say, “No, these are just bigger animals. Maybe these are some ancient animals that are extinct now,” it is still hard to see how that correlates with God saying, “You can’t administer justice over this evil.” So it seems like it is pointing toward something beyond just the physical because He already gave this long speech on the physical. This seems to be moving to something bigger.

Third, other Scriptures point to leviathan as a storybook mythical creature:

- In Job 3:8, leviathan was mentioned as a god of chaos.
- In Isaiah 27:1, it is described as the twisting serpent, the dragon that is in the sea.
- In Psalm 74:12-14, Asaph spoke of the exodus in terms of God breaking the heads of the sea monsters and having crushed the heads of leviathan.
- Revelation 12:9 takes imagery without using this name and speaks of beasts, dragons and serpents, applying them to Satan.
- In Revelation 20:2 says, *“And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him...”*

Fourth, the section explains how God dealt with the problem of supernatural evil in the created order and used well-known stories to point out that only the Lord can keep evil on a leash. As God asked, “Would you put him on a leash and give him to your girls?” this is a picture of leviathan that seems to tie in well with what chapter one pictured with Satan. This is not some cosmic dualism, where it’s God versus Satan and we are not sure which one is going to win. It is about God Who rules sovereignly over all things, including Satan, evil and chaos.

It is not until the New Testament that we learn what it cost God to win this victory over leviathan. Ash also says that this victory over leviathan was won on the cross, as Hebrews 2:14 says that it's "*through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil...*"

## Our Response

How are we supposed to respond to this? You may be sitting here and thinking, "No, I'm pretty sure these are animals being described here," or thinking, "No, they are mythical creatures." Either way, they have to be symbolizing and pointing to something bigger than that because of what this section is doing, because of what Job needed as God answered him and because of the way Job responded, saying, "Now, I understand You are not just the Ruler over things seen but over things unseen. Now, God, I see You and I repent."

Let's look again at how Job responded when he heard this. In verse two, he said, "God, I know that You can do all things and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted." Understanding that God rules over both the physical and the spiritual builds our faith in His sovereign power.

Listen to the Word of the Lord:

- Psalm 115:3 says, "*Our God is in the heavens, and he does all that he pleases.*"
- Proverbs 16:9 says, "*The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.*"
- Second Chronicles 20:6 says, "*O Lord, God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. In your hand are power and might, so that none is able to withstand you.*"
- Psalm 135:6 says, "*Whatever the Lord pleases, he does, in heaven and in earth, and in the seas and in the deeps.*"
- Ephesians 1:11 says, "*He works all things after the counsel of his will.*"
- Romans 11:36 says, "*From him and through him and to him are all things.*"
- In Isaiah 55:8-9, God says, "*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.*"

We need to respond to this by believing that God rules all and that God is good.

- In Genesis 50:20, Joseph said, "*As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive as they are today.*"
- Psalm 84:11: "*God withholds no good thing from those who walk uprightly.*"

- Nehemiah 9:31: *“Nevertheless, in your great mercies, you did not make an end of them or forsake them, for you are a gracious and merciful God.”*
- Exodus 34:6: *“The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, ‘The LORD [Yahweh], a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.’”*
- Psalm 86:15: *“But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.”*

Returning to Job 42:2: *“I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.”* And Job 42:5 states *“I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”*

We need to realize and remember that there are billions of events and circumstances happening in this world right now that we do not know about and there are things we could not possibly know. There are probably millions and maybe billions of things happening, even right around us, but our view of this world is so limited and so finite. That is not wrong; that is just who we are. We are created. We are finite people so we see things and interpret them as much as our minds can allow us to interpret.

So we do not know what God knows. We do not know what He has been doing throughout history other than what was recorded for us. We do not know what is going on in this world all around us. Joseph did not know why he was sent to Egypt and then to prison, and why all these things happened to him. However, there is a bigger picture. We can trust that there is a God Who knows.

Like Job, we are tempted to think, “God, I would have done this differently,” or, “God, You messed up here,” or, “God, You shouldn’t have done this. God, You should not have brought this trial into my life, this tragedy. You should not have let that happen to this person. They didn’t deserve it.” We start thinking all these things and going down the road Job went, to which God would say, “Do you put Me in the wrong? Do you understand? Do you have any idea how much I am ruling over right now, and how your story is one piece of that puzzle?” He has ruled over these billions and trillions of events for a long time and He is doing just fine.

John Piper gives four ways to respond to truths like this. They are four prayers for us:

1. Believe with all your heart in the absolute sovereignty of God and pray that God would give you that conviction. When you are tempted to look at your circumstances and wonder, “Is God in control of this?” pray, “God, give me conviction to believe You are sovereign, over both the seen and the unseen.”
2. Believe with all your heart that everything He does is right and good. Pray that God will give you that assurance. When you think about this one, go back to our opening

- question: “Is it ever right to be angry with God?” My guess is that normally when you are asking that question you are looking at something God has done and thinking it does not seem right or good. So you get angry about that. We would all say we should not be angry with God over good things He does, right? That makes sense. However, as soon as those words come off our lips, we realize everything God does is good, even when it does not feel good. We must believe with all our heart that everything He does is right and good.
3. Repent of all the times you have questioned God or found fault with Him in the way He has treated you. That is how we should respond to this passage—repenting of ways you have questioned Him or found fault with Him. Pray that God would humble you so that you would see these murmurings as sinful.
  4. Be satisfied with the holy will of God and do not murmur, trusting that, as you look through your eyes at this world, there are things you just do not understand. His thoughts are above your thoughts. His ways are above your ways (Isaiah 55:8). He is good and we can trust Him.

Let’s pray.

God, as we read this passage, we are reminded of the depth of the evil that exists in this world. We don’t downplay that at all, but we are trusting in the fact that evil won’t win; that evil is on a leash; that You have already won; that You are in control over all things, accomplishing Your purposes and working them for good. God, open our eyes like Job’s were so we can see You clearly; so that our vision is enlarged; so that we see You as sovereignly ruling over all things physical and spiritual, seen and unseen; and so that we trust that one day all creatures will bow before You as sovereign King. We praise You and we pray this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

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