

Jehovah Speaks to Job (chapters 38-41)

The expressions of divine favor and love are not to be expected in the midst of angry controversy and heated debate. Neither Job nor his friends appear to have enjoyed communion with God, or to have tasted much of the happiness of religion, while the controversy was going on. They were excited by the discussion; the argument was the main thing; and on both sides they gave vent to emotions that were little consistent with the reigning love of God in the heart, and with the enjoyment of religion. There were high words; mutual criminations and recriminations; strong doubts expressed about the sincerity and purity of each other's character; and many things were said on both sides, as there usually is in such cases, derogatory to the character and government of God. (*Barnes' Notes*)

After the bickering concluded between the three friends, Elihu and Job, "...Jehovah spoke the final word" (Hailey 331). God's point of view is always the only point of view that really and eternally matters. Generally, mankind is slow to accept that fact regarding human redemption, acceptable worship, Christian living, Christian service and other Gospel truths. Unlike Job and those about him, we do not have to wait and wonder if God will speak to us; He has already spoken to us through the Bible, and those living today especially need to observe His message in the New Testament of Jesus Christ (Romans 7:6-7; Hebrews 9:15).

Homer Hailey observed that, "Jehovah made no reference to the background (ch. 1-2), to Job's suffering or to his questions, charges, and harsh words, except to reveal that Job had spoken without knowledge" (331). God could have explained to Job how he had come about to suffer because he was an unparalleled specimen of humanity or that Satan was really behind the suffering instead of God, but the Almighty did not and was not obligated to explain or defend Himself. We humans do not have the right to and cannot cross-examine God. "Job did not receive explanations regarding his problems; but he did come to a much deeper sense of the majesty and loving care of God. Thus he came to trust Him more fully, knowing that His ways should not be challenged. Though often inexplicable and mysterious, God's plans are benevolent and beneficial" (*Bible Knowledge*).

"This speech is addressed particularly to Job, not only because he is the principal personage referred to in the book, but particularly because he had indulged in language of murmuring and complaint. God designed to bring him to a proper state of mind before he appeared openly for his vindication" (*Barnes' Notes*). Job had wanted an audience with God, and now Almighty God stepped forth, so to speak, addressing him out of a whirlwind. "In a series of more than seventy, rapid-fire questions, the Lord bludgeons Job to his knees. ...Jehovah's questions are designed to emphasize two great propositions: His sovereignty in the *natural order of the universe* (38:1; cf. 40:5); and, His sovereignty in the *moral order of the universe* (40:6 – 41:34)" (Jackson 79). "...Jehovah asked questions which were intended to make Job realize the great distance between God and man" (Hailey 349). Mortals tend to forget about the magnitude of the gulf between God and man from every perspective.

Rather than Job summoning God to court and putting Him on trial for the injustices of which Job had accused Him, it was Job who was on trial and who was required to answer for himself before God. Likewise, our day in court awaits each of us, too (2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation

20:12-15). “God alone can ‘demand’ an account from His creatures (Job 42:4); man must not presume to ‘demand’ an account of God’s doings, but take it for granted that they must be good and righteous just because they emanate from God, who cannot but do right” (*Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown*).

Historically, there have been two types of monarchy among humans: **absolute monarchy** or **constitutional monarchy**. The King under an absolute monarchy was above the law. His word was final, and his behavior was not subject to critical review from anyone within his kingdom. For instance, ancient Babylonian kings were absolute monarchs. However, the King under a constitutional monarchy was obligated to obey the law as well as were all others within that kingdom. Medo-Persian kings were among the first such rulers to be subject to the laws of the kingdom like everyone else; in addition, Persian law was immutable so that it could not be changed even by the king himself (Esther 8:8). Today among nations, Saudi Arabia has an absolute monarchy, whereas the United Kingdom and Thailand are examples of constitutional monarchies now.

Our Creator God demonstrated to Job, to the other four speakers in the Book of Job, to the probable audience taking in the discourses, and to Satan, as well as to every student of the Book of Job, that He is the **absolute monarch** of **the entire universe** and of **the spiritual realm**, too. The point that we wish to make here is that **God is not answerable to anyone!** Neither Job nor we, as part of the **creation** at the hands of our **Creator**, have any standing to question God on any level. We are as clay in the hands of the Master Potter (Jeremiah 18:1-5), and as such, we lack the power to shape God, to effectively counteract His divine instructions (Matthew 7:21-23) found upon the pages of inspiration (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21) or to evade His appointed Judgment Day (Hebrews 9:27). At every step in our lives, and especially as we approach Almighty God in sacred, holy worship, each of us desperately needs to remember the rightful, unquestioned sovereignty of Jehovah God.

“The most impressive and convincing manner of arguing is allowed to be that by interrogation, which the Almighty here adopts” (Clarke). God tested the knowledge and wisdom of Job respecting several elements of creation, including: laying the foundation of the earth, the origin and boundary of the sea, the dawning of a new day, springs in the ocean floor, canyons and mountains beneath the seas, the realm of the dead, paths of light, the value of snow and hail, wind and rain, lightning, seasonal changes, heavenly bodies, the animal world, and what we today call dinosaurs (Jackson 79-88). Essentially, in no uncertain terms, God told “...Job that he is not qualified to rule the world, nor is he in a position to judge Him who does!” (Jackson 85).

Job Is Blessed (chapter 42)

The last chapter of the Book of Job opens with Job replying to God. How unique and wonderful is that! Sometimes in both testaments when the Godhead intervened, particularly evil people had no recourse whereby they could speak directly to God. They simply and immediately experienced the wrath of God, often with their sudden death. Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:1-2) as well as Uzzah (2 Samuel 6:6-7) in the Old Testament were struck dead quickly, and Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-10) in the New Testament record died instantly. Hundreds of thousands of Israelites perished in the wilderness over 40 years because of their sins, such as the many who died because of the biting, fiery serpents sent upon them by God (Numbers 21:6-7; 1 Corinthians 10:9).

“Job knew he was beaten. There was no way he could argue his case with God” (*Bible Exposition*). What could Job say to Almighty God? Job acknowledged God’s sovereignty in

contrast to his own personal failings. “I have uttered what I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know” (verse 3). “I abhor myself, And repent in dust and ashes” (verse 6). “The sage of Uz is admitting the humbling effect of Jehovah’s questions. ...Job is thus sorry for his rash, though anguished, words. ...it is *never* right to lash out at God. While we are hurting very badly, it may be a *human* thing to do, but it is always wrong, and when we ‘get hold’ of ourselves, we will repent!” (Jackson 92). “...Job was neither confessing to nor repenting of sins charged by the friends, because he was not guilty of them” (Hailey 366).

We need to remember always the sovereignty of God over us, and especially in contrast to our own personal failings. We, too, must repent whenever we discover that our lives are out of harmony with divine instruction. Under patriarchy, Job was a child of God, and if we have obeyed the Gospel through and including baptism (Mark 16:16; 2 Thessalonians 1:8), we too are children of God. As children of God, then, through repentance and prayer our sins also can be forgiven (Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9). Obviously, God accepted Job’s penitence since Jehovah remarkably blessed Job afterward.

“Now that the difference between Jehovah and Job has been resolved, Jehovah directed His attention to the friends, addressing Eliphaz as representative of the three” (Hailey 367). The *three friends*, though, had to act out repentance and petition of God for them to obtain spiritual restoration. Jehovah placed requirements upon them that included their repentance toward Job as well. God referred to “my servant” Job four times in in verses 7-8, which further validated faithful Job to the friends and all present who heard God speak (Jackson 94). Hailey suggested that “[t]he large number of sacrifices demanded infers the seriousness of their sins in God’s sight” (367).

The *three friends* were dependent for their forgiveness upon Job’s prayer for them. “Prayer, on behalf of others, when they are penitent, is effective (James 5:15,16)... Is it not truly remarkable that Job should unhesitatingly pray for these who had so relentlessly made him the object of their verbal assaults?” (Jackson 94).

We should overcome the unkindness of our friends by praying for them; see the notes at Job 42:8 Job 42:10. This is the true way of meeting harsh reproaches and unkind reflections on our character. Whatever may be the severity with which we are treated by others; whatever charges they may bring against us of hypocrisy or wickedness; however ingenious may be their arguments to prove this, or however cutting their sarcasm and retorts, we should never refuse to pray for them. We should always be willing to seek the blessing of God upon them, and be ready to bear them on our hearts before the throne of mercy. (*Barnes’ Notes*)

We need to pray for our enemies, or as in the Book of Job, pray for friends or brethren who have made themselves our enemies (Matthew 5:44).

Whereas some translations speak here of the “wrath” of God toward them (verse 7), other versions word it as God’s “anger.” **We simply do not want God to be angry with us!** “When the Scriptures say, therefore, that Jehovah is angry, man had better take notice” (Jackson 93). We can know, today, whether God is angry or happy with us by inspecting our lives with the Word of God; we do not want to wait until we appear before the Judgment Seat of Jesus Christ to ascertain whether God is angry with us.

Funny isn’t how ones friends and relatives are sometimes more difficult to find during the hard times, but they are plentiful during occasions of prosperity? “We are horrified to have it brought distinctly before us on the last page of the book that Job had had brothers and sisters as well as other acquaintances during the whole time of his affliction; and yet they had discreetly

retired from the unpleasant neighbourhood of the afflicted man. Now they reappear with his prosperity” (*Pulpit Commentary*). However, God used friends and family, in part, to restore to Job some of his former wealth and self-esteem.

The restoration of blessings to Job is certainly a pleasing end to the intense saga compacted into the book’s 42 chapters. Material blessings and earthly happiness, though, do not represent the complete picture; our lives consist of more than eating, drinking or clothing ourselves (Matthew 6:25, 31-33). “But Job’s greatest blessing was not the regaining of his health and wealth or the rebuilding of his family and circle of friends. His greatest blessing was knowing God better...” (*Bible Exposition*)

Concluding Thoughts

Overall, one might say that for his *pain and suffering*, but more so because of his relentless loyalty to God, the Almighty doubly blessed Job over family and property he formerly enjoyed. The most important messages from the Book of Job for us today must be these: “Even when we become discouraged and weak, we must still know that God is there and He loves us. ...no matter how dismal things look upon the earth, uprightness will ultimately prevail. ...friends and family may fail one, but God never will forsake the righteous...” (Jackson 98). “...Job...though he may have ‘bent,’ he never broke” (Hailey 371). We, too, may find ourselves *down but not out!*

A couple concluding notes of interest pertain to Satan and an inheritance custom. “There is more spaced devoted to Satan in the book of Job than in any other portion of the Scriptures” (Jackson 98). “Job’s giving an inheritance to his daughters led Delitzsch to observe, ‘Ver. 15b sounds more Arabian than Israelitish,’ because a daughter’s receiving an inheritance under the Mosaic law depended on the father’s not having sons (Num. 27:6-11). This adds further evidence for the antiquity of the book’s background” (Hailey 370).

Finally, we conclude from the Book of Job:

We must not misinterpret this final chapter and conclude that every trial will end with all problems solved, all hard feelings forgiven, and everybody “living happily ever after.” It just doesn’t always happen that way! This chapter assures us that, no matter what happens to us, God always writes the last chapter. Therefore, we don’t have to be afraid. We can trust God to do what is right, no matter how painful our situation might be. (*Bible Exposition*)

In addition, *Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown* makes this allegorical comparison between the status of the “three friends” and humanity today. “As Job’s friends had to come to God for reconciliation through the intercession of him whom they had wronged (Job 42:8-9), so must we come through the intercession of that Saviour whom our whole race has dishonoured and crucified by sin.”

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