

Job | A Probe into the Wisdom of God
Preaching Chapters 38-42

CONTEXT:

- Has Job sinned as his friends claim?
- Is Job blameless as he claims?
- Why do the righteous suffer?
- Where is wisdom to be found?
- Who is really wise?
- Is God just?
- Does Job fear God for nothing? Will he maintain his integrity or will he devise a strategy to recover his benefits?

- All these questions and more are scrapping and clawing for an answer as we arrive at chapters 38-42.
- Will Yahweh speak? This has been Job's wish ever since his suffering began. Job's been hoping for a court date with God. (See Job 23:3-7)

THE BIG PICTURE¹

Job 1-2	Prose Prologue set in Heaven
Job 3-31	Job's dialogue with his three friends
Job 3	Job's lament
Job 4-27	Three cycles of dialogues with Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar
Job 28	Divine Wisdom poem
Job 29-31	Job's final speech
Job 32-27	Elihu's speech to Job
Job 38-42:6	Yahweh speaks from the whirlwind
Job 42:7-17	Prose Epilogue on the restoration of Job's fortune

GENRE:

- The book begins and ends with narrative, but the heart and development of the book's message rides on the genre of poetic speech/dialogue/drama.

- Problem Drama: Poses a problem at the beginning that characters then interact with and debate.

¹ Tremper Longman and Raymond B. Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 2nd edition (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 227.

- Problem posed at the beginning of Job: Why do the righteous suffer?
Primary positions:
 1. God is fair and Job is sinful
 2. Job is innocent and God unfair²

The speeches of Yahweh in Job 38-42 are a blend of multiple genres—all blended to create a unique form:

- Theophany
- Hymn of praise
- Dispute
- Interrogation of a defendant
- The essential nature of these speeches is a hymn of praise, but the list of natural phenomena and the series of rhetorical questions dominate their structure.

Primary Literary Device: Irony

- Yahweh employs irony throughout the speeches in order to break through Job's defense, defuse the bitterness of his complaint, and awaken him to the danger of his present stance.³

STRUCTURE:⁴

The Lord Finally Speaks to Job (38:1-42:6)

- 1. The Lord's First Introductory Challenge (38:1-3)
- 2. The Divine Interrogation (38:4-39:30)
- 3. Concluding Challenge (40:1-2)
 - 4. Job's First repentance (40:3-5)
- 5. The Lord's Second Introductory Challenge (40:6-7)
- 6. Second Interrogation (40:8-41:34)
 - 7. Job's Second Repentance (42:1-6)

Epilogue (42:7-17)

- 1. The Lord's judgement on Job's Friends (42:7-9)
- 2. Job's latter prosperity (42:10-11)
- 3. Job's latter days (42:12-17)

TEXT | Job 38-42

- These final chapters are the high point of the book of Job.
- Now at last Job has his wish—an audience with God. The Lord answers no one but Job.

² Leland Ryken, *Introductions to the Books of the Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015), 175.

³ John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 489.

⁴ Robert L. Alden, *Job*. NAC, vol. II (Nashville, Broadman & Holman, 1993), 43.

- God shows up, but he does not let Job make his case. Instead, God presents his own. What God says is totally unexpected. Instead of discoursing on authority, justice, and sovereignty . . . God blitzes the man from Uz with a myriad of questions about the created order. Job and his friends have not only found the wrong answers, they have been asking the wrong questions.
- These two speeches of Yahweh are some of the most remarkable descriptions in the Bible of God’s work in creation.
- Both Speeches contain the same elements:⁵
 - Prosaic Introduction 38:1 40:6
 - Exhortation to Job 38:2-3 40:7
 - Interrogation of Job 38:4-39:30 40:15-41:26
 - Challenge to Job 40:2 40:8-14
 - [The place of the challenge to Job at the conclusion of the first speech and at the head of the second speech forms a chiasm designed to heighten the impact of Yahweh’s challenge.]⁶

Yahweh’s First Introductory Challenge | I Ask, You Answer (38:1-3)

- (v. 1) The Lord—“Yahweh” answered Job out of the whirlwind . . .
 - The name Yahweh appears only in Job 1-2, 38-42, with one lone exception in the middle of the book, 12:9.
 - The storm—a veil of sorts. Clouds and mist both conceal and reveal divine glory.
 - Word for “whirlwind” harkens back to the “mighty wind” of 1:19 that took the lives of Job’s ten children.
- (v. 2) “Who is this that darkens counsel?”
 - The Lord’s first sentence was a question that chastened and mortified Job “darkens”—casts a shadow of ignorance.
- (v. 3) “Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me.”
 - “Gird your loins”—gathering up the flowing garment into the belt in order to do work or wrestle.

Yahweh’s First Interrogation | Man is Ignorant of Cosmic Realities (38:4-39:30)

- 1. (v. 4-7) The earth and its creation
- 2. (v. 8-11) The sea and its boundaries
- 3. (v. 12-15) The morning and evening
- 4. (v. 16-18) Springs of the sea, the deep, underworld
- 5. (v. 19-21) Light and Darkness
- 6. (v. 22-24) Snow, hail, storms
- 7. (v. 25-27) Rain, lightning, watering desolate places
- 8. (v. 28-30) Rain, dew, ice, frost
- 9. (v. 31-33) Stars, Constellations, The heavens
- 10. (v. 34-38) Rain, clouds, lightning, floods

⁵ Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 33.

⁶ *Ibid.*

- 11. (v. 39-41) Lion’s prey and Raven’s food
- 12. (39:1-4) Mountain Goats (Ibex) giving birth
- 13. (v. 5-8) Wild donkey
- 14. (v. 9-12) Wild ox
- 15. (v. 13-18) Ostrich
- 16. (v. 19-25) Horses
- 17. (v. 26-30) Hawk and Eagle

- Yahweh seeks to convince Job that he created the world in wisdom and that he governs it wisely, in justice and compassion.

Concluding Challenge | No Man Can Contend with God (40:1-2)

- (v. 1-2) “Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty? He, who argues with God, let him answer it.”
- “God calls creation to the witness chair, and creation’s valid testimony renders Job, his friend, and all humanity morally inexcusable and intellectually incapable of criticizing God’s character.”⁷

- The point of the first speech—Job open your eyes (you know nothing!) See the complexity of the world and your ignorance of the way it all works.

Job’s First Repentance | I am small and will be silent (40:3-5)

- “small account” – “unworthy” –light in weight as opposed to “*kabed*” – “heavy/worthy/honorable.”
- Job covered his mouth, the same thing the “chief men” did toward him in the good old days Job described in 29:9.

Yahweh’s Second Introductory Challenge | I Ask, You Answer (40:6-7)

Yahweh’s Second Interrogation | Man is Powerless and Unqualified to Question God (40:8-41:34)

- God ironically invites Job to clothe himself with the attributes of the Supreme Ruler, and conduct the rule of the world himself.
- (v. 10-14) Here God begins a series of four verses containing ten imperatives, commands to do things that a man might try to do, but only God can do with effectiveness.
 - Two pairs of alliterated words make up the four attributes of God that he ordered Job to adopt for himself.
 - Glory and splendor
 - Honor and majesty

⁷ Douglas Sean O’Donnell, *The Beginning and End of Wisdom: Preaching Christ from the First and Last Chapters of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2011), 112.

- Behemoth and Leviathan:
 - The most powerful creatures imaginable on earth.
 - Much ink has been spilled prognosticating on the identity of these two creatures.
 - These animals would have been recognizable to the ancient audience.
 - In the end, it is not as important to arrive at a confident identification of these creatures, as it is to recognize how God is using them.

- (40:15-24) Behemoth:
 - Transliterated, usually means cattle. Here the plural has intensive force, meaning “a super beast”—the noblest and strongest.
 - Most commonly identified with the hippopotamus.
 - Other suggestions: elephant, buffalo,
 - Extinct Dinosaur: Apatosaurus or Brontosaurus
 - No rhetorical questions here, simply an invitation to behold the mightiest of beasts—yet a creature that is still one of God’s pets!

- (41:1-34) Leviathan:
 - Most commonly identified with the crocodile.
 - Extinct Dinosaur: Spinosaurus or Tyrannosaurus
 - Given 3x the space as behemoth

- God’s point: As impossible as it would be for any human to challenge, control, or domesticate behemoth or leviathan—it is infinitely more impossible to challenge or control God who controls both of these creatures. Both Behemoth and Leviathan are living demonstrations of the overwhelming power of God that surpasses all human capacity to rebuke or check.

Job’s Second Repentance | I repent and am comforted (42:1-6)

- About half of this portion is Job quoting what God said to him.
- Job is contrite, but he does not confess any overt or covert sin.
- (v. 1-2) Job confessed that his God had been too small. He recognizes God’s sovereignty, omnipotence, and unchallenged providence.
- (v. 3) Job admits his ignorance and submits to God’s infinitely greater wisdom and knowledge.
- (v. 5) Job expresses that he has now directly encountered God in a more personal way than ever before. Job now sees God with a divinely orchestrated clearness.
- (v. 6)
 - “despise”—I reject/discard/spurn my ignorant words
 - “repent”—turning from one perspective to a completely new one—absolute surrender. Job repented of his growing impatience with God, accusing God of being unjust, and claiming to have greater insight than God...
 - “repent” and comfort” are both translations of the same word, but the context expects repentance.

(42:7-17) Epilogue | Job's Vindication and Restoration

- (v. 7-9) Vindication: God rebukes Job's friends and vindicates Job.
 - What was right about what Job said?
 - Job never renounced God, cursed God, or fled from God.
 - Job did not give in to the faulty arguments of his friends.
 - Job did not pursue strategies to appease God and regain his benefits.
 - Job did not lose his integrity and confess sin he didn't commit (James 5:11).
- (v. 10-11) Restoration: God restores Job's fortunes and his friends/family comfort him.
- (v. 12-17) The Rest of the Story: God doubles Job's possessions, provides 10 more children, and Job lives to be old and full of days.
 - (v. 14) Job's daughters are named:
 - Jemimah—dove (a name used for graceful birds, plants, or special stones)
 - Keziah is cassia—the aromatic plant for a type of perfume
 - Keren-happuch means horn (or box) of eye-paint or powder used by oriental women to add luster to the eye.
 - Job either lived 140 years total or 140 more years after his vindication. Either way he lived at least double the normal lifespan.—Psalm 90:10, "The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty . . ." ⁸
 - "Four Generations"
 - the crown of a blessed life (Ps. 128:6; Prov. 17:6)
 - Died, old and full of years:
 - This epitaph is the same as that used for the noblest among God's servants.
 - Abraham (Gen. 25:8)
 - Isaac (Gen. 35:29)
 - David (1 Chr 29:28)
 - Jehoiada the priest (2 Chr 24:15)

THEOLOGY:

- Job ask hard questions . . . Is God worth serving?
 - He allows the faithful to be tested.
 - The God who tests also hears, speaks, vindicates, and heals.
 - God allows the righteous to suffer in this situation in order to prove that He is worth serving under all conditions.
 - Thus, Job is more about reasons for righteousness than it is reasons for suffering.⁹

- Righteousness: The question is "Why is Job righteous?" not "Why is Job suffering?"

⁸ LXX reads that Job lived 170 years after his trial to the age of 240. According to this tradition, then Job was 70 when he was afflicted.

⁹ John H. Walton and Tremper Longman III, *How to Read Job* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2015), 13.

- God's Greatness, Goodness, and Mercy:
 - Yahweh's interrogations of Job reveal that His divine working in nature is infinitely exalted above human knowledge and power. Nature also reflects the goodness of God. He restrains the waters. He sends rain. He provides food.
 - Though he is not obligated to, God answers Job!
 - Transcendence and immanence: God reveals himself in majesty and power to Job but also in a way that displays his closeness to creation and individual creatures.
 - God's Work in Creation: First speech: God is a master builder, the sea's midwife, and the light's commanding officer. He holds the world's most intimate secrets. (38:4-24)

- God's Holiness, Judgment, and Justice:
 - Whirlwind signifies judgement and holiness. The storm veils the fullness of God's glory/holiness that Job would not have been able to handle.
 - The justice of God is beyond mankind's full comprehension.

- Human Suffering:
 - Purpose of suffering: Job's suffering draws him into a deeper and closer relationship with God.
 - How should people respond when suffering enters their lives? This question has reverberated through the centuries of Christian experience.
 - God reminds Job that there are mysteries in nature beyond his understanding. In the same way, suffering can be a mystery. God never tells Job why he has suffered. However, God does come close to Job during his suffering and uses it to draw Job closer to Him.
 - Not all suffering is the result of human/personal sin.

- Divine Revelation:
 - God chooses to speak.
 - God speaks only truth.
 - The truth sets us free.

PREACHING TIPS:

- 1. Harness the gravity of the moment: Yahweh speaks!
- 2. Think in terms of a debate. Yahweh is making an argument. Imagine a cosmic courtroom.
- 3. Communicate the irony.
- 4. Unpack the images, metaphors, and illustrations.
- 5. Focus on the questions the book explicitly asks:
 - 1. Satan: Does Job fear God for nothing?
 - 2. Job's Friends: Do the righteous ever suffer?
 - 3. Job: Is God wise in all he does?

- Remember the answers are within the beginning and end of the book.
- Caution: “The preacher must be careful not to make the speeches of Job’s so-called friends normative, for in Job 42:7 God declares that their speeches were incorrect and, as a consequence, not revelational.”¹⁰
- “Yahweh’s speeches in Job (38:1-42:6) provide the message of the book (in interaction with Job, the three friends and Elihu). Any passage from Ecclesiastes has to be preached in the context of the whole book, and the same is true for Job.”¹¹

SERMON PLANNING:

- Single Sermon (Job 38-42)
- Two Sermons:
 - 1. Yahweh’s Response: 38:1-42:6
 - 2. Epilogue: 42:7-17
- Three Sermons:
 - 1. First Speech and Job’s Response: 38:1-40:5
 - 2. Second Speech and Job’s Response: 40:6-42:6
 - 3. Epilogue: 42:7-17

PREACHING CHRIST:

- What Does Job have to do with Jesus?¹²
 - Job 42:7-9
 - Man has sinned against God.
 - God is angry at sin and rightfully so.
 - In his mercy, God deals with these sinners not according to their folly. It is through blood sacrifice and an innocent man’s mediation that their sins are forgiven.
 - Does that scenario sound familiar to you? It is the big picture of the Gospel!
 - Job is not Jesus . . . but his story prepares us in an extraordinary way for the story of Jesus!
 - A. Jesus is the embodiment of God’s wisdom.
 - B. Jesus, like Job, is an innocent sufferer.
 - C. The final word on suffering is the resurrection.
- Job and Jesus connection:
 - “My Servant”
 - Twice in the prologue: 1:8, 2:3

¹⁰ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. *Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament: A Guide for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 94.

¹¹ Grenville J. R. Kent, Paul J. Kisling, and Laurence A. Turner, eds. *Reclaiming the Old Testament for Christian Preaching* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity, 2010), 114.

¹² See O’Donnell, *The Beginning and End of Wisdom*, 113-17.

- Four times in the epilogue: 42:7-8

APPLICATION:

- Health/Wealth/Prosperity:
 - Adverse circumstances do not have to tarnish one's faith in God, for the basis of a person's relationship with God is his fear of God and his shunning of evil, not his health and his wealth.
- Training for times of crisis/suffering:
 - Run to God
 - Cling to God.
 - Trust God.
 - Do not question God's wisdom.
 - Do not be quick to assume God is judging when you are suffering.
 - The message of Job delivers us from doubting the love of God or thinking we just must not be living right when things go wrong.
- Righteousness: Do you fear God for nothing?
 - "We often suffer. We sometimes understand. We can always trust."¹³
 - Righteousness does not guarantee physical blessings on earth.
 - Blessings do not come from manipulating or appeasing God.

Song Lyrics: Andraé Crouch & The Disciples | If Heaven Was Never Promised To Me

*You may ask me why I serve the Lord,
Is it just for heaven's gain.
Or to walk those mighty streets of gold,
And to hear the angels sing.
Is it just to drink from the fountain,
That never shall run dry.
Or just to live forever, ever, and ever,
In that sweet, sweet bye and bye.*

Chorus:

*But if heaven never was promised to me,
Neither God's promise to live eternally.
It's been worth just having the Lord in my life.
Living in a world of darkness,
You came along and brought me the light.*

If there were never any streets of gold,

¹³ Mark Dever, *Promises Made: The Message of the Old Testament* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006), 468.

*Neither a land where we'll never grow old,
It's been worth just having the Lord in my life.
You've been my closest friend down through the years,
And every time I cry You dry my tears.*

- Where do we as Christians find wisdom?
 - In a relationship with Jesus Christ—the embodiment of God’s wisdom.
 - 1 Cor. 1:24
 - Col. 2:3

CONCLUSION:

- “Satan was as wrong about Job as Dr. Seuss’s Grinch was wrong about the Whos down in Who-ville at Christmas time, thinking that if he stole all the toys and treats, surely they would not keep singing and celebrating. But, they keep singing!”¹⁴
- Job: “. . . a book that will renew our vows, so to speak, reminding us that we are to be faithful to God—for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health—that we are to love God, to cherish him as he does us, whether he gives or takes away.”¹⁵
- “The book of Job is a wisdom debate. It’s not really about suffering. The suffering of Job becomes an occasion to address the issue of wisdom.”¹⁶
- Above all, the book of Job teaches us that even though we do not have all the facts, God intends to display his glory in the lives of his children as they continue to serve him amid life’s trials.

¹⁴ Ibid., 476.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Grenville, Kissling, and Turner, eds. *Reclaiming the Old Testament for Christian Preaching*, 118.