

God's Speech – Part 1

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – God answers Job and his friends by exalting his sovereign greatness over all things
2. aim – To cause us to see the sovereignty of God over every aspect of our lives
3. passage – Job 38:1-41:34

b. outline

1. God's Sovereignty Over Creation (Job 38:1-39:30)
2. Job's Response to God's Questions (Job 40:1-5)
3. God's Sovereignty Over Man (Job 40:6-41:34)

c. opening

1. a **review** of the book up to this point
 - a. in **1:1-5**, we are *introduced to Job*, a man who is both wealthy and righteous
 - b. in **1:6-2:10**, we get a glimpse into the *heavenly councils*, two gatherings *by God* of his angelic servants – in *each*, God *proclaims* the nature of Job as righteous before Satan
 1. Satan questions this righteousness of Job, and God allows him to attack Job
 2. **we know why**: Job's righteousness **is of the declaration and purpose of God**, and nothing Satan can do will change Job's status – God's intention is to demonstrate *his* purposes in Job
 - c. in **chap. 3**, Job gives an *initial* lament in response to Satan's attack: even having *been born*
 - d. in **chaps. 4-25**, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar attempt to persuade Job that his suffering has been caused *by his own sin* – **i.e.** if he will simply confess before the "deity," his suffering will be abated
 1. Job responds to each friend, slowly realizing that their answer is *shallow*, and there must be more – yet, he still struggles to "make peace" with the *incongruity* of his life and his suffering
 - e. in **chaps. 26-31**, Job makes his *final* appeal
 1. he will *again* assert his own righteousness, that he has *not* sinned to deserve suffering
 2. yet, he will *continue* to lament that he has no way to defend his cause before an *infinite* God
 - f. in **chaps. 32-37**, Elihu enters into the conversation, suggesting that Job's quest for "answers" (and his own protestations of innocence) are *misplaced*
 1. Elihu turns the conversation *towards God*, pointing out that the justice, greatness, and majesty of God are *too great* for the "puny" needs of Job (or the *naïve* points of Job's other friends)
 - g. **summary**: Job is afflicted by God (through Satan) to demonstrate an *eternal* purpose, and Job (and his friends) try to "figure out" what it all means – but, in the end, the friends' assertion is demonstrated to be false (and rejected!), but, while Elihu does point Job towards God, Job still comes up "short" in discerning the *eternal purpose* of his situation
 - h. **specifically**: Job seems to justify himself over the sovereign purposes of God – **i.e.** that it is all about Job, rather than **the sovereignty of God on display through him**
2. the **entry of God** into the discussion
 - a. **consideration #1/3**: there is "no" answer given by God as to *why* Job is suffering
 1. actually, there *is* an answer, *if* you're willing to listen for it ...
 2. true, there is no answer given by God explaining to Job *what purpose there is* in his suffering
 - a. God never says, "here's why you are suffering, and here's what I'm doing with it!"
 - b. but ... that's not *really* the question we *typically* ask ...
 1. because we know the answer: when you live in a fallen world, suffering is *inevitable*
 2. and, for the adopted son of God, it is often designed to *grow our faith* (**e.g. Hebrews 12**)
 3. so, the *real* question we ask is: who are *you*; who *gave you permission* over me?
 - a. **IOW**: since *I* am the "god" of my life, how *dare you* do what *you* want?
 - b. and ... this is *precisely* the answer God gives to Job ... **who he is ...**
 - c. because ... in many ways, that is the problem with Job and his friends ...
 - b. **consideration #2/3**: Calvin points out the following (from **Sermon 147** on **38:1-4**):
 1. God chooses to use men to bring his Word to us, and he does this out of *pity* – however, when God *really wants to get our attention*, he comes down to us *in power*
 - a. God has *pity* on us when he ordains men who are ministers of his word to teach us – he knows our limits, and he knows that we would be overwhelmed by his majesty and destroyed by his glory if he taught us *directly* – so, he "comes down to our level" in preaching
 1. **i.e.** the "*foolishness*" (**1 Cor. 1:27**) of *human* preaching "protects us" (**so to speak**)

- b. but ... we also need to be “touched” (once in a while) so we will revere him as he deserves
 1. since Job was not sufficiently convinced by the arguments of Elihu (nor by considering his own suffering), God makes him aware of his greatness by means of a whirlwind
 2. so that Job would be frightened in such a way that he would give in and acknowledge his error and fully obey what was put before him

“That is the first thing we have to note about this passage, namely that when God speaks to us by the mouth of men, it is so that we will approach him more freely, that we will more easily receive what he offers us and not be unduly astonished. But since we are thick-skinned and do not give him the honor he deserves, he makes us aware of who he is and presents himself in his majesty to persuade us to pay him homage.” (Calvin)
 3. **implying**: sometimes the “storms” in life are designed to show us the greatness of God, and to frighten us out of our complacency ...
2. **we know**: God *himself* “bridged” the gap between human preaching and a divine presence in the Incarnation of the Son of God (**next week**: first Sunday of Advent)
 - a. Jesus Christ, the God-man, preached to us that we might hear God *without fear*
 - b. yet ... he *also* embodied the *fullness* of the divine glory, that we might *fear God* as well

“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.” (Hebrews 1:1-2)
- c. **consideration #3/3**: the relationship of natural revelation to special revelation in **Job**
 1. **natural revelation** = what can be known about God by observing the created order; the knowledge of God “intrinsic” within creation itself: in the world and in the *Imago Dei*
 - a. **IOW**: the undeniable apologetic for God (and his law) by *observation* (**Romans 1:19f**)
 - b. **e.g.** the law of murder known by Cain *thousands of years* before it was codified on Sinai
 - c. Job and friends have full access to this level of understanding of God (**more than us?**)
 2. **special revelation** = the unique act of God to reveal *specifically* what is needed *beyond* what is visible in creation: his decree, his plan of redemption, his expectations of righteousness, etc.
 - a. the *unique* ways that God speaks directly to humans: through Scripture, through prophets, and (sometimes!) through *direct contact* with men (**see below**)
 - b. **e.g.** God visibly manifesting himself to Abraham to “seal” his covenant (**Genesis 15**)
 3. **question**: how is it (then) that Job’s friends are able to “quote” bits of wisdom that are contained in *special revelation*, but not yet written (*i.e.* in other *wisdom* literature, **e.g.** Proverbs)?
 - a. has God, *in fact*, been providing “forms” of special revelation to the generations *prior* to Moses, so that men *could fully know God and his ways* even before Israel?
 1. **e.g.** Noah – 100 years of calling men to repentance (**1 Peter 3:18f**)
 - b. **answer**: it is *likely* that these men have “greater” understanding *because God has revealed some things to them*, as a part of his decree to *work through Job*
 4. but now ... God *himself* comes to speak – to bring **special revelation** to them (**and to us!**)
 - a. **IMO**: this speech of God answers the question *he himself* poses to Satan: “*have you considered my servant Job?*” (**Job 1:8**)
 - b. **answer**: because I am the Sovereign One, I do with all things *as I please* – I have purposed to show my power and glory through Job, **and no one can change what I have decreed**
 5. **IOW**: God now gives us the *reason* for the heavenly council, the righteousness of Job, the “struggle” Job had with his friends, etc. – *i.e.* why this book is in the Canon of Scripture
3. the **structure** of the speech of God
 - a. the speech of God can be broken into **two (2) halves**, with a short response by Job in the middle
 - b. in **chaps. 38-39**, God **asks Job** a series of *rhetorical questions* about what he has created, and whether Job was involved in the design of each element (**by implication**)
 1. or, the sovereignty of God **over creation**
 2. **IOW**: since God is the sovereign creator, no one dares to question his power *or his morality*
 - c. in **the interlude of 40:1-5**, God **challenges Job** to answer him in regards to the above, and Job responds by putting his hand over his mouth (*i.e.* I’ve got nothing to say, I have no defense)
 - d. in **chaps 40-41**, God **rebukes Job** for elevating himself to the position of “god”, asking *another* series of *rhetorical questions* regarding his power and position (**more directly**)
 1. or, the sovereignty of God **over man**
 2. **IOW**: since God is the ruler of men, no one dares to question his authority *or his intentions*

I. God's Sovereignty Over Creation (Job 38:1-39:30)

Content

a. God speaks from “*the whirlwind*” (38:1, 40:6)

1. **i.e.** at the beginning of each “half,” the writer notes that God speaks to Job from a *whirlwind*
 - a. **note**: it is interesting that Elihu *specifically compares God* to the image of a storm (**see 37:1-5**)
 1. **IMO**: God hears this, and shows up *precisely* in the way imagined

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2. almost as if to say “Elihu, I’ll take it from here …” (*i.e.* *interrupting* Elihu to get the final word)
 - b. **theophany** – an appearance of God to “communicate” with someone *directly*
 1. **like epiphany** = W: the appearance of the Magi to Christ (as to the Gentiles); E: the appearance of Christ revealed as the Son in his baptism (**Matthew 3:16-17**; **see below**)
 2. often in a non-human form (**as here**), sometimes in human form (**e.g.** to “wrestle” with Jacob; **Genesis 32:24**), sometimes as “*the angel of the Lord*” (**e.g.** to Hagar; **Genesis 16:9**)
 3. not to be confused with *specific angelic* appearances (**e.g.** Gabriel to Mary; **Luke 1:26**)
 2. “whirlwind” (*ā-rāh*) = a storm; a tempest; a swirling mass of air that moves at great speed (and is often *destructive*; **irony alert!**); *i.e.* a tornadic weather event (**e.g.** a hurricane, on the Mediterranean)
 - a. **e.g.** the same word is used to describe how Elijah was “*taken up to heaven*” (**2 Kings 2:11**)
 - b. **e.g.** the *opposite* of the “*still small voice*” that Elijah heard in the cave (**1 Kings 9:12 KJV**)
 - c. **e.g.** similar to the “*mighty rushing wind*” that was heard by the disciples on Pentecost (**Acts 2:1**)
 3. **IOW**: a *physical manifestation* of the presence of God, from which comes forth God’s voice
 - a. **e.g.** the fire of the Burning Bush (**Exodus 3:4**)
 - b. **IMO**: from a **Trinitarian** perspective, this is the **Third Person** in a non-corporeal form
 1. “*no one has seen the Father*” (**John 6:46**), the *Son* appears *in human form* (as he will become *Incarnate* in flesh), thus, it is the *Spirit* that appears in forms like fire, wind (**e.g.** Pentecost), or a dove (**e.g.** at Jesus’ baptism)
 2. **note**: it would be our “tendency” to see this as *the Father* (given the *creation-focus* in the speech), but a proper *Trinitarianism* reminds us to see the *fullness of the Godhead* in the Spirit, who can “speak for the Godhead” (*i.e.* as in the Scriptures; **2 Timothy 3:16**)
 - a. and, who was *instrumental* in the creation itself (**see Genesis 1:2**)
 3. **IOW**: the *Pneuma* (Breath) of God which comes to Job to speak for the Triune God, just as he did to Moses in the Bush, and even as he does *now* through the Word, “breathing” out faith through the preacher (**Romans 10:13-17**)
 4. and ... this “whirlwind” has *metaphorical* applications, as well:
 - a. just as Job and his friends were going “round-and-round” trying find answers to dilemmas, chasing after “theories,” God *intervenes* with a “pure” whirlwind to finish the discussion
 - b. God’s word comes to destroy the arguments of Job and his friends – now that God speaks, the *true nature* of the situation is revealed (**see above**), and the “speculations” and “lofty arguments” of these men are *blown away* in favor of the whole truth
- b. God confronts Job to answer (38:2-3)**
1. **read 38:2-3**: God demands for Job to answer *his* questions
 - a. **note**: this is in *direct response* to Job demanding that *God* answer his questions (**e.g.** **31:35**; “*let the Almighty answer me*”) – God now “turns the tables” and demands answers *from Job*
 - b. “*who ... darkens counsel*” (**v. 2**) = lit. hides or dims counsel; someone who *thinks* they understand and gives “advice” from a position of weakness
 1. a **play-on-words**: Job seems to question God on the basis of what he *does not know* (because it is hidden from him; *i.e.* the heavenly counsel)
 2. so, God will come and speak from a position of *knowledge*, in contrast to Job’s ignorance
 - c. “*dress for action like a man*” (**v. 3a**) = lit. “*gird your loins*” (KJV); prepare yourself for battle; take up your place and be prepared for what may come
 1. God demands that Job now come and stand before him
 2. **IMO**: this is not a *terrible* rebuke (although it looks like one!) – more likely, God is simply calling this righteous man (by his own decree!) to stand before him and receive the answers he needs
 - d. “*I will question you, and you make it known to me*” (**v. 3b**) = I will ask *you* questions, and you give me answers, even though my questions are *unanswerable to you* (*i.e.* the point!!)
 2. **Job 38-41 is God’s Word, his special revelation coming to Job, and to us – we are now poised to hear what this book is really about, and how it impacts us going forward**
 - a. **so ... gird your loins, here we go ...**