

God's Speech – Part 5

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. the **structure** of the speech of God (**in two halves**)
 - a. in **chaps. 38-39**, God **asked Job** a series of *rhetorical questions* about what he has created, and whether Job was involved in the design of each element (the sovereignty of God **over creation**)
 1. where were **you**, O Job, when I (the Creator) established the *foundations* of the world?
 2. can **you**, O Job, like me (the Creator) set the world's *ecosystems* in order?
 3. do **you**, O Job, because of me (the Creator), truly understand the struggle to *survive*?
 - b. 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 (the sovereignty of God **over man**)
 1. **ITC**: turning the "creation narrative" questions from the physical world to the *human world* – the culmination of the creative work of God being *humanity*, and God seeking answers from Job about **who he thinks he is in the face of God's works**
 2. but first ... an **interlude**, God turning to Job to pose a **non-rhetorical** question ...

II. Job's Response to God's Questions (Job 40:1-5)

Content

a. God's direct question to Job

1. **read 40:1-2**: God demands for Job to answer his questions, to give a reply, to **justify himself**
 - a. God calls Job a "*faultfinder*" = someone who *questions* another's actions or motives; to **impugn** the *character* of someone by *assuming* their motives are impure or their actions wrong
 1. **e.g.** in **Colossians 2:16**, Paul commands believers to "*let no one pass judgment on you*"
 - a. specifically, to not allow others to impugn *your* Christian witness by virtue of *their opinions* on matters like what to (not) *eat or drink*, what (not) to *celebrate*, what (not) to do *religiously*
 1. **i.e.** because **Jesus** is Lord of the Church – by virtue of *his Incarnation* (the fullness of deity in flesh), and our inclusion in his "**second**" Incarnation (the body of Christ, the Church), we answer *only to him*, and not to the *opinions* of others re: our spiritual walk
 - b. this would be similar: a "*faultfinder*" is Job assuming, *based on his own opinions*, that God's actions or motives are impure or wrong
 - b. Job has *impugned* the character of God in his "accusations" – by asserting that God has either 1) abandoned him, and/or 2) is punishing him, Job impugns the *sovereign nature* of God
 1. Job has questioned the **morality** of God's motives and actions – he has questioned the *purity* of God based on *his (limited!) circumstances*, rather than on seeing the "larger picture"
 2. **i.e.** all of the questions in the **First Half** of God's speech are designed to probe this:
 - a. do you, O Job, really understand the nature and morality of **me**, the Almighty One, *as you examine my power, order, and majesty in creating this world*?
 3. so (**now!**), God **calls him on it** – to come and stand before him, and "*let him answer it*" (**v. 2b**)

b. Job's answer to God's demand

1. **read 40:3-5**: Job responds by admitting his *puniness* and *insufficiency* before the Almighty
 - a. "*I am of small account*" = slight; insignificant; accursed; trifling; having no significant power or authority in comparison to God (or others, for that matter)
 1. this is in *direct contrast* to Job's assertions in **29:21-25**, where he claimed:
 - a. "*men listened to me and waited ... for my counsel*" (**v. 21**); "*I smiled on them when they had no confidence*" (**v. 24**), "*I chose their way and sat as chief, and I lived like a king*" (**v. 25**)
 - b. **i.e.** before *men*, Job was "something" ...

2. but now ... as Job stands *before God*, he realizes *he who really is*
 - a. all of the questions asked in **chaps. 38-39** put Job *in his place*
 - b. **i.e.** he has no power over *anything* in creation, he was not *consulted* for his wisdom in forming the earth and ordering its ways, and much of it *is still very mysterious* to him
 - c. **Job:** your *true nature as the Sovereign God* humbles me – against the backdrop of your immense power and majesty and perfections, *I am nothing*
3. **step #1:** the first thing the regenerate man **must (will!) know** is his “place” before God
 - a. the reprobate man stands *proud* before God, seeing *himself* as all-important
 - b. the regenerate man stands **humble** before God, seeing *Christ* as all-important
 - c. to be born-again is to come to the realization that **God is power** – it is *his* power that has raised me from the dead, it is *his* decree that has purposed me to be alive through faith in Christ, and it is to *his* glory for this to come to be **(a true humbling)**
- b. “*I lay my hand on my mouth*” = I will not speak again; I will be mute; I will not *dare* to question you
 1. “*I have spoken once ... twice ... but I will proceed no further*” = not Job “counting” his speeches, but *admitting* that he dared to question *not once, but twice-fold*
 - a. **i.e.** a *double-questioning* of the purposes and nature of God; *doubly* asserting himself as *needing to receive an answer* – a sense of *double-pride*, even greater than just *once*
 - b. Job has questioned *both* 1) the *goodness* of God, and 2) the *faithfulness* of God – he has asserted multiple times that God had *abandoned* him to his suffering (**e.g. 30:20-23**)
 - c. **remember:** at the *very beginning (chap. 3)*, Job lamented *even his very existence*, as though it would have been better if God had never allowed him to live *at all*
 2. **step #2:** the second thing the regenerate man **must (will!) do** is trust the Living God
 - a. the reprobate man trusts *only himself*, leaning upon his *own* understanding and plans
 - b. the regenerate man trusts **Christ Jesus the Lord**, leaning upon *the plans* of God in life
 - c. to be born-again is to put faith in what **God has promised** – to recognize *his* plans as unassailable over us, even when our circumstances “seem” to contradict it (**Prov. 3:5-7**)
“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.”
- c. so ... **shouldn’t this be enough?** – now that Job has *admitted* his mistake, why would God *continue* to question him over his actions and attitudes (**why a Second Half?**)
 1. **answer:** Job doesn’t *quite yet fully* understand *what he has missed* ...
 2. Job (at this point) understands he shouldn’t have questioned the *motives* of God in allowing suffering to come into his life – but there is *more*, something he was only *beginning* to see ...
 3. he needs to grasp a *higher concept*, one *above* the “simple” idea that God is *powerful*
 - a. namely, that all things are due to **the sovereignty of God even over man (read 42:2)**
 - b. God being *powerful* over the animal kingdom is a “good start” – but to *fully grasp* the point of Job’s suffering requires him (and us!) to recognize an even *greater truth*:
 - c. specifically, that God’s *sovereign intention* in all circumstances demonstrates: **all he decrees will come to pass, and nothing can change his plans or purposes**
 - d. **e.g. sola Scriptura** asserts *more* than just the *inerrancy* of Scripture – it also asserts the *sufficiency* of Scripture (**i.e.** that the Bible *actually answers* the issues of life)
 1. **synergism** asserts: “God is sovereign”, but “only up to a point” – Scripture asserts: God is sovereign over *everything that comes to pass*, for he has *decreed it* and his plans cannot be thwarted (**i.e.** even by the devil himself; **see below**)
 2. a very **reassuring** concept (**i.e.** the world is *not* a “random” place; suffering has *purpose*)
 - d. so ... God takes up his discourse *again* ... but *this time* to focus Job on this point ...

III. God's Sovereignty Over Man (Job 40:6-41:34)

Content

a. God confronts Job to answer (40:6-9)

1. **read 40:6-9:** God demands for Job (**again!**) to answer *his* questions
 - a. **again:** in *direct response* to Job demanding that God answer *his* questions (**e.g. 31:35**; “*let the Almighty answer me*”) – God now looks *directly at Job* (metaphorically) and *confronts him*
 - b. **again:** “*dress for action like a man (v. 7a)*” = lit. “*gird your loins*” (KJV); prepare yourself for battle; take up your place and be prepared for what may come – stand before me, *puny human*
 - c. **again:** “*I will question you, and you make it known to me (v. 7b)*” = I will ask *you* questions, and you give me answers, even though my questions will *embarrass you*

- d. **the ultimate question:** “will you even put me in the wrong?” and “will you condemn me that you may be in the right?” (v. 8; emphasis mine)
1. Job had (in fact!) accused God (**by implication!**) of being “unfair” and/or “in the wrong”
 - a. **e.g.** in **chap. 31**, Job asserts that his behavior has been righteous, thus he has no need to “justify” himself before men (or before God)
 - b. yet, this conclusion comes *after* he has (**chap. 30**) lamented being in great turmoil over *why* these things are happening to him – his *flesh* raises doubts about the goodness of God
 - c. **IOW:** Job struggles with the “why” of his circumstances; this causes him to “waver” back-and-forth between God being *good* (**when all is well**) and God being *unfair* (**when it is not**)
 - d. **true:** Job has come *far*, and (**again**) this is *not* a terrible rebuke – rather, it is a moment for God to make the point of *the book* (**i.e.** God’s purposes) to Job **and to future generations**
 2. **reality:** the *natural tendency* of fallen human beings to “lower” God and “elevate” ourselves
 - a. **parallel:** “have you an arm like God ... can you thunder with a voice like his?” (v. 9)
 - b. to “reduce” the power and knowledge and purposes of God so that we can “hold onto” our position as *free creatures* – to protect the “free will” of men by *subverting* the power of God
 - c. **e.g.** the *assumption* that the Son of God *must have* “set aside” certain of his *divine* attributes (**i.e.** omnipresence) in order to robe himself in *human* flesh (kenosis)
 1. that Jesus must have been *mostly* human while here on earth, and is now *mostly* divine
 2. but ... this is contrary to Paul’s understanding in **Colossians 1:15, 19; 2:3**
“He [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God ... for in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell ... in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”
 3. it is to “lower” the Person of the Son (to fit our *human* understanding) to assert that “some” of the divine attributes had to be “set aside” for him to become the God-man
 - d. thus ... to “lower” the *nature* of God to our level by either 1) *blaming* him for the evil that befalls us, or 2) asserting that he cannot *decree* suffering to be a part of our existence
 1. **note:** it is this *conundrum* that causes **synergists** to *discard* any *decree* of God (**i.e.** it cannot fit with a “protection” of human “free will” to have God “deciding” things)
 2. **in fact:** God *decrees* for suffering to be a part of our existence, and he *uses* suffering to *bring about* his good purposes – **to deny him that right is to “put [him] in the wrong”**
 3. **i.e.** to attribute to God what is “wrong” **from our own opinions** about what constitutes “right” is to impugn his character – **to question God himself is the problem**
 3. so, this is where God’s speech will now go: Job, by contending over the “reasons” for suffering, you have (**unintentionally?**) made yourself out to be “god”
 - a. and I, the Lord, will now call you to answer *to me*, the Almighty ...