

## God Challenges Job

**Lesson Scope:** Job 38 through 41

### Lesson Focus

Thus far in our study of Job we have looked at some behind-the-scenes details of the conflict between God and Satan. We have also traced the muddled, yet at times, lofty arguments of mortals endeavoring to explain the sovereign God's purposes and doings. In Lesson 3 we traced a godly man's heart cry after God. This lesson now brings us to the climax of this amazing narrative.

Throughout Job's discourse with his friends, he expressed his longing to hear from God. Finally, God broke in upon this scene of human disputation with a divine challenge (chapter 38). In a volley of questions that Job could not answer, God impressed upon him the vast gulf between the ignorance of mortal man and the infinity of the sovereign Creator. After Job's feeble response (Job 40:3-5), God in effect said, "Be a man and answer!" God asked him to do some more things (Job 40:7-14) that he obviously could not do. God then proceeded to describe two powerful creatures, impressing upon Job and his friends their impotence before His omnipotence. The point of all these questions and descriptions is to declare that man, who is so ignorant and insignificant in relation to God's government in nature, is in no position to pass judgment on God's moral government or anything He does or allows.

In his efforts to counter his friends' accusations, Job spoke more confidently and self-approvingly than was wise. God's challenges were intended to help him acknowledge how very dependent upon God he was. As we will see in next week's lesson, his response pleased God.

There must be an emphasis on man's proper response to God's greatness. A worshipful attitude toward God and a humble attitude toward himself make a good combination for the servant of God. Endeavor to develop these thoughts as you conclude the lesson.

A sound view of life is essential for understanding life's problems. Above all we must view God in proper perspective.

**Lesson Aim:** To help us gain a vision of our infinite God in contrast to finite man.

**Theme Verse:** [Psalm 147:5](#). Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite.

## Lesson Text

### The Creator Versus a Creature

[Job 38:1-7](#) <sup>1</sup> Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, <sup>2</sup> Who *is* this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? <sup>3</sup> Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. <sup>4</sup> Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. <sup>5</sup> Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? <sup>6</sup> Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof; <sup>7</sup> When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

### The Sustainer Versus a Dependent

[Job 38:12-13](#) <sup>12</sup> Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days; *and* caused the dayspring to know his place; <sup>13</sup> That it might take hold of the ends of the earth, that the wicked might be shaken out of it? [Job 38:18-22](#) <sup>18</sup> Hast thou perceived the breadth of the earth? declare if thou knowest it all. <sup>19</sup> Where *is* the way *where* light dwelleth? and *as for* darkness, where *is* the place thereof, <sup>20</sup> That thou shouldest take it to the bound thereof, and that thou shouldest know the paths *to* the house thereof? <sup>21</sup> Knowest thou *it*, because thou wast then born? or *because* the number of thy days *is* great? <sup>22</sup> Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow? or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail, [Job 38:31-41](#) <sup>31</sup> Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? <sup>32</sup> Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season? or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons? <sup>33</sup> Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth? <sup>34</sup> Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, that abundance of waters may cover thee? <sup>35</sup> Canst thou send lightnings, that they may go, and say unto thee, Here we *are*? <sup>36</sup> Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts? or who hath given understanding to the heart? <sup>37</sup> Who can number the clouds in wisdom? or who can stay the bottles of heaven, <sup>38</sup> When the dust groweth into hardness, and the clods cleave fast together-

er? <sup>39</sup> Wilt thou hunt the prey for the lion? or fill the appetite of the young lions, <sup>40</sup> When they couch in *their* dens, *and* abide in the covert to lie in wait? <sup>41</sup> Who provideth for the raven his food? when his young ones cry unto God, they wander for lack of meat.

### **The Administrator Versus a Mortal**

**Job 40:7-14** <sup>7</sup> Gird up thy loins now like a man: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. <sup>8</sup> Wilt thou also disannul my judgment? wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous? <sup>9</sup> Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like him? <sup>10</sup> Deck thyself now *with* majesty and excellency; and array thyself with glory and beauty. <sup>11</sup> Cast abroad the rage of thy wrath: and behold every one *that is* proud, and abase him. <sup>12</sup> Look on every one *that is* proud, *and* bring him low; and tread down the wicked in their place. <sup>13</sup> Hide them in the dust together; *and* bind their faces in secret. <sup>14</sup> Then will I also confess unto thee that thine own right hand can save thee.

### **Questions for Study**

#### **The Creator Versus a Creature**

1. Suggest possible reasons why God spoke to Job (Job 38:2) rather than to his friends.
2. How might we become guilty of darkening counsel by words without knowledge?
3. What was the reason for God's questions to Job in Job 38:4-6?

#### **The Sustainer Versus a Dependent**

4. Enumerate some mysteries about light.
5. Compare God's maintenance of the universe with man's natural realm of responsibility.

#### **The Administrator Versus a Mortal**

6. Why did God demand an answer from Job in Job 40:7?
7. How can we guard against approving ourselves?

### **Analyzing the Passage**

In Job 38:2 notice that God charged Job with obscuring right principles by speaking in his ignorance.

In verses 4-6 God used common builders' terminology to express facts about the earth that man cannot really comprehend or explain (see Job 26:7).

The morning stars and sons of God in Job 38:7 refer to the angels. They

sang and shouted for joy at the creation.

In Job 38:12-13 God likened the rising of the sun to His taking the ends of the earth and shaking the wicked out of it. Because men love darkness rather than light, they flee as darkness leaves.

By its very nature, light is always in motion. It therefore dwells in a way, not in a place (Job 38:19). Scientists still struggle to define light and how it travels.

The order, vastness, and complexity of the starry heavens picture well God's infinity (Job 38:31-33). The heavenly bodies move with such precision that man can predict eclipses years in advance and send spacecraft to rendezvous with distant planets. Man can reckon all his time by them, because God has fixed their movements.

God spoke to Job in irony (Job 40:10), telling him to array himself with glory and beauty even while he was covered with boils and clothed in sackcloth.

## **Principles and Applications**

### **The Creator Versus a Creature**

1. God reveals Himself to men when and how He pleases (Job 38:1-3). God's timing in speaking to Job was perfect. Job and his three friends had ended their discourses, and Job had been exposed to Elihu's more positive influence. Down through the ages, God has used prophets, angels, His Holy Spirit, and His Word to communicate His message to man. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18), but His revelation is given as men are ready for it or as His purposes unfold.

2. Man's attempts to analyze God's purposes often cloud, rather than clarify, truth (Job 38:2). Job had many questions about God's workings in his life. He actually knew very little about some of the issues of which he spoke. We, likewise, may be guilty of overexerting ourselves when we have only opinions, not facts about God's movings. We must let God be God and remember that we are but men.

3. God's orderly, majestic creation testifies of His infinity (Job 38:4-7). Finite man was not yet created when God made the world and established its order. God did not need man's counsel in the Creation. From the minute details of particles of matter to the magnificence of the starry heavens, all creation attests to the omniscience and omnipotence of the Creator. Therefore, "Let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before

the LORD our maker" (Psalm 95:6).

### **The Sustainer Versus a Dependent**

4. Each new day testifies to God's infinity (Job 38:12, 13). Man is altogether bound by time. God, the Creator of time and the natural time-keeper, inhabits eternity. In His marvelous wisdom, God has made just the right environment to sustain life. That will continue as long as the earth remains (Genesis 8:22).

5. Man's inability to understand light reveals his finitude compared to God's infinitude (Job 38:19-21). Light is essential to man's very existence, yet it is beyond man's ability to define, analyze, or control. Truly man is utterly dependent upon the Father of lights, whose faithfulness and unchangeableness continues to sustain His creation (James 1:17).

6. Man's utter inability to control the weather or the heavenly bodies reveals his smallness before the infinite God (Job 38:22, 31-38). From floods to droughts and from untimely freezes to unbearable heat, the elements of nature constantly pose a challenge to mankind. And while men speculate and attempt to investigate concerning the nature of distant planets, those bodies continue to move according to their Creator's design. "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him?" (Psalm 8:3, 4).

7. God's sustenance of His creatures dwarfs man's most ambitious efforts (Job 38:39-41). Even though man has learned many things about animal husbandry, he would be totally inadequate to care for all the creatures of the earth. Both the science and the economics of such an endeavor are far beyond man's ability. "The young lions ... seek their meat from God.... O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches" (Psalm 104:21, 24).

### **The Administrator Versus a Mortal**

8. To question God's actions is to exalt man's wisdom above God's (Job 40:7-8). When we do not understand a Scripture passage, its accuracy is not under question but rather our understanding of it. Likewise, when we do not understand why God allows unpleasant or disappointing experiences, we may not question His integrity. God always does all things well.

9. Man's inability to truly exalt himself or abase others proves his inability to save himself (Job 40:9-14). God alone will exalt or abase. All

the modern self-help is nothing before Christ. Jesus said, "Without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). Christ alone can make one spiritually alive and maintain that life.

### **Important Teachings**

1. God reveals Himself to men when and how He pleases (Job 38:1-3).
2. Man's attempts to analyze God's purposes often cloud, rather than clarify, truth (Job 38:2).
3. God's orderly, majestic creation testifies of His infinity (Job 38:4-7).
4. Each new day testifies to God's infinity (Job 38:12-13).
5. Man's inability to understand light reveals his finitude compared to God's infinitude (Job 38:19-21).
6. Man's utter inability to control the weather or the heavenly bodies reveals his smallness before the infinite God (Job 38:22, 31-38).
7. God's sustenance of His creatures dwarfs man's most ambitious efforts (Job 38:39-41).
8. To question God's actions is to exalt man's wisdom above God's (Job 40:7-8).
9. Man's inability to truly exalt himself or abase others proves his inability to save himself (Job 40:9-14).

### **Answers to Questions**

1. Suggest possible reasons why God spoke to Job (Job 38:2) rather than to his friends.

In His words to Satan, God had approved Job's life. But now Job had to acknowledge some things to maintain that approval. God knew that Job would respond rightly, and that He could then use Job to challenge his friends in their error. God was also speaking to Job because Job was asking and seeking after God.

2. How might we become guilty of darkening counsel by words without knowledge?

We could question why we need to experience difficulty in life, rather than submitting to God's purposes and growing spiritually. We might not be open to the counsel of a concerned brother or sister about something in our life. We might think or say something about the life of one who shared the concern. In areas of practical application, we might not be as open to the direction of the church as we should be. Job's friends did this by reasoning and guessing at the reasons for Job's troubles.

3. What was the reason for God's questions to Job in Job 38:4-6? God was helping Job to see his smallness in comparison to God's greatness and power in the Creation.

4. Enumerate some mysteries about light.

Man has difficulty understanding what light really is or how it travels. Man cannot explain how the earth's source of light, the sun, can continue to supply the earth with light without that energy coming to an end. Man cannot really explain the complicated process of photosynthesis—how green plants use light from the sun to produce food in their leaves.

5. Compare God's maintenance of the universe with man's natural realm of responsibility.

God upholds and sustains all the universe by His power; man only works with God's unchanging laws. God sustains all the universe; man works with a very small part of God's creation. God is unlimited in His power to sustain; man is very limited by his finitude.

6. Why did God demand an answer from Job in Job 40:7?

God was helping Job see his own smallness and God's greatness. The fact that Job could not answer God's questions helped him to see his need to humble himself.

7. How can we guard against approving ourselves?

We must always keep in sharp focus that all we are and all that we accomplish of good is only by God's grace. We must always seek to please God and diligently guard against our native tendency to please ourselves. We must not seek the approval of men. We must remember that the path to God's approval is a path of self-denial.

### **Summarizing the Lesson**

In the presence of Almighty God, we recognize our smallness and dependence upon Him. We see His ability and power to accomplish all just as He sees is perfectly right. We humble ourselves before Him and acknowledge that it is only through Christ that we receive strength to do God's will.

### **Research Guide**

1. Read the article "The Omnipotence of God" in the Eastern Mennonite Testimony (January 1982).

2. Read in a reference book about "Light" and "Astronomy." Some facts about these marvels will be helpful.