Title: God's First Reply to Job: Not "Why" but "Who" (Part 2)

Number: 1023Job38.12-30(37)

Text: 38:12-30

Central Idea: Tough Questions Melt in the Light of God's Nature

Date: October 22, 2023

{Read Text / Prayer}

12 "Have you ever in your life commanded the morning, And caused the dawn to know its place, 13 That it might take hold of the ends of the earth, And the wicked be shaken out of it? 14 "It is changed like clay under the seal; And they stand forth like a garment. 15 "From the wicked their light is withheld, And the uplifted arm is broken. 16 "Have you entered into the springs of the sea Or walked in the recesses of the deep? 17 "Have the gates of death been revealed to you, Or have you seen the gates of deep darkness? 18 "Have you understood the expanse of the earth? Tell Me, if you know all this. 19 "Where is the way to the dwelling of light? And darkness, where is its place, 20 That you may take it to its territory And that you may discern the paths to its home? 21 "You know, for you were born then, And the number of your days is great! 22 "Have you entered the storehouses of the snow, Or have you seen the storehouses of the hail, 23 Which I have reserved for the time of distress, For the day of war and battle? 24 "Where is the way that the light is divided, Or the east wind scattered on the earth? 25 "Who has cleft a channel for the flood, Or a way for the thunderbolt, 26 To bring rain on a land without people, On a desert without a man in it, 27 To satisfy the waste and desolate land And to make the seeds of grass to sprout? 28 "Has the rain a father? Or who has begotten the drops of dew? 29 "From whose womb has come the ice? And the frost of heaven, who has given it birth? 30 "Water becomes hard like stone, And the surface of the deep is imprisoned.

Robert Dick Wilson was professor of OT in Semitic languages from 1900 to 1929 at Princeton Theological Seminary. Was back in t/days when its was a fortress of theol. ortho. Serving on that same faculty had been B.B. Warfield, J. Gresham Machen, & other notable theologians. When Machen later left and began Westminster Seminary Robert Dick Wilson left with him.

The great expositor Donald Grey Barnhouse was a student at Princeton from 1915-1917. Barnhouse later went on to t/Tenth Presby. CH in Philadelphia to serve as senior pastor for 33 years.

Together, they formed t/new school.

But before his pastorate, about 12 yrs after he grad. from Princeton, t/school invited Barnhouse to come back to t/seminary to preach in chapel. W/trepidation Barnhouse accepted t/invitation. T/day finally arrived. He noticed just before he got up to preach, his former professor, Robert Dick Wilson walked in & came all the way down to t/front & sat close to t/chapel pulpit.

There was his old professor sitting right up front. Can be intimidating (I rem. when, as a novice preacher, my syst. theol. prof. sat in on 1 of my sermons). Intimidating, even for a preacher as strong as D.G.B.

Barnhouse said later when he finished his message, Dr. Wilson walked up to him, shook his hand, & said, 'If you come back, I will not come hear you preach. I only come once to hear my boys. And I come only to see if they are big Godders or little Godders.'

Not sure that he understood what Dr. Wilson meant by that, Barnhouse asked for an explanation. "Oh," he said, "it's very simple. Some men have only a little God and they are always in trouble w/Him. He can't do the miraculous. He can't take care of life's details. He doesn't intervene on behalf of His people. They have a little God & so I call them 'little Godders.' Then there are those who have a great & mighty God. He speaks & it is done. He commands & it stands fast. He knows how to show Himself strong on behalf of those who fear Him."

Barnhouse, anxious to know in which category he was, breathed a sigh of relief when he heard the man's final statement. "You, Donald, have a great God . . . and He will bless your ministry." [adapted from the story cited in Swindoll, 263]

You can't preach any text of Scripture, much less Job 38 w/o being confronted by a Big God. That's t/point He is driving into Job's mind.

The story is told of Benjamin Jowett, when he was Headmaster of Balliot College at Oxford. Someone asked him the question, "Dr. Jowett, we would like to know your opinion of God." His reply: "The only constant anxiety of my life is to know what is God's opinion of me." [Ash, 374]

That also speaks to this passage. What is God's opinion of Job.

[i] Review of last time . . . Been a few weeks . . .

[ii] Title / Main Idea / Outline

I. God's First Reply to Job: Who Are You? (38:1-40:2)

- A. God's Opening Statement (38:1-3)
- B. God as Prosecuting Attorney and Judge (38:4-39:30)
- 1. Job's Finiteness: Were You There? (38:4-11)
- 2. Job's Experience: Have You? (38:12-30)
- 3. Job's Ability: Can You? (38:31-41)
- 4. Job's Knowledge: Do You Know? (39:1-4)
- 5. Job's Impotence: Who is Almighty? (39:5-30)
- C. God's Closing Argument (40:1-2)

Tough questions melt in the light of God's nature.

A. God's Opening Statement (38:1-3)

1 Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind . . .

1. Tetragrammaton: YHWH

We noted t/signif. of this last time. YHWH = the name that God much later revealed to Moses.

Exodus 3 Cf. John 8:58 (εγω ειμι / LXX).

Speaks of G's self-existence / aseity ("I AM THAT I AM")

& His covenant relationship to His people.

a. Christophany

We said that this was quite possibly a Christophany {define}. Not w/o precedent as we see, for example, Isaiah's vision of t/YHWH in Isa. 6 attributed to being a Christophonic appearance of JC. Cf. John 12:41.

2. What does God ask (1st of over 70 questions)?

- 2 "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?
- a. Job's words were "without knowledge" as Elihu said twice in his addresses to Job
 - 3. Warrior speech
- 3 "Now gird up your loins like a man, and I will ask you, and you instruct Me!
 - 4. Job the plaintiff now becomes Job the defendant

Job is on the witness stand; G. is examining Him.

B. God as Prosecuting Attorney and Judge (38:4-39:30)

God meets Job in court — which is what Job asked for ==>

31:35–37 35 "Oh that I had one to hear me! Behold, here is my signature; Let the Almighty answer me! And the indictment which my adversary has written, 36 Surely I would carry it on my shoulder, I would bind it to myself like a crown. 37 "I would declare to Him the number of my steps; Like a prince I would approach Him.

We categorized t/1st series of ?s G. asks under t/heading ==>

1. Job's Finiteness: Were You There? (38:4-11)

These ?s are designed to demon. t/finiteness of Job as cf. to G's omni.

- a. Questions about Creation (38:4-7)
- (1) God is the architect (4-5a)
- (b) God is the surveyor (v 5b)
- (c) God is the engineer (v 6)
- 1. Job's Finiteness: Were You There? (38:4-11)

- a. Questions about the earth (38:4-7)
- b. Questions about the sea (38:8-11)
- (a) We go from the metaphor of constructing a building (earth) to a metaphor of childbirth (sea)

Sea is likened to a newborn infant that emerging "from the womb" & "wrapped in the swaddling clothes."

This is t/indescribable magnificence of God!

Tough Questions Melt in the Light of God's Nature

- B. God as Prosecuting Attorney and Judge (38:4-39:30)
- 1. Job's Finiteness: Were You There? (38:4-11)
- 2. Job's Experience: Have You? (38:12-30)

We see that phrase "have you" as in "have you ever done this?" repeated over/over.

- a. Questions about Light and Darkness (38:12-15)
- (1) Light in the morning or dawn
- 12 "Have you ever in your life commanded the morning, and caused the dawn to know its place,
 - (a) Word "commanded" Heb. בוה = "to command, cause to do, charge someone to do something."

He commands the morning to appear.

All of creation is under his direct control.

- i. Contradicts Deism . . . All actions subsist in God's sovereignty
- ii. We infer from the past that the future will be the same (inductive inference)

Example: Sun rose this AM ==> will do so tomorrow AM.

That is an assumption based on past experience. (Basis of science).

Note David Hume's objections.

T/Xn has a basis ground for that assumption: G's prov. will.

iii. Pictures God as Commanding General

Note t/metaphors we saw last time ==>

- (1) Creation (38:4-7)
- (a) God is the architect (4-5a) -He set the foundations of the earth
- (b) God is the surveyor (v 5b) He stretched a line across it
- (c) God is the engineer (v 6) He laid the cornerstone

Even as a parent of a new-born (vv. 8-11) — where t/seas are likened to t/birth of an infant, gushing forth from a womb, wrapped in cloths.

Here G. is seen as a General commanding t/morning to appear.

To what end?

13 that it might take hold of the ends of the earth, and the wicked be shaken out of it? 14 "It is changed like clay under the seal; and they stand forth like a garment. 15 "From the wicked their light is withheld, and the uplifted arm is broken.

(b) Two things going on in these 3 verses

i. 1st - you have daylight likened to a blanket

Poetic picture of t/dawn reaching out to t/edges of the earth, as tho it were a blanket/garment, shaking t/wicked out.

Picture taking a blanket you have used in a picnic, grabbing it by t/corners to shake off t/dirt and grass.

* What does it mean that the wicked are shaken out?

When are most violent crimes committed? Night.

It's after dark that you R most concernd to be out in unfamiliar places.

** We saw that in 24 (Job replying to Eliphaz)

13 [he speaks of the wicked] . . .who rebel against the light; They do not want to know its ways Nor abide in its paths. 14 "The murderer arises at dawn; He kills the poor and the needy, And at night he is as a thief. 15 "The eye of the adulterer waits for the twilight, Saying, 'No eye will see me.' And he disguises his face.

As the day grows brighter, evil doers who love darkness and practice their crimes under its cover find themselves looking for places to hide. As a bright light scatters cockroaches, so each new day presents a threat to the murderers, adulterers, and burglars that Job mentioned in 24:14–17. [Robert L. Alden]

*** When that happens to the wicked, as we see in v. 15:

15... their "light" is withheld, and the uplifted arm is broken.

See word "light" in " " — night is "light" to them.

Uplifted arm pictures defiance. That is broken by t/light of day.

Think of a movie I saw as a kid about a vampire. An investigative journalist found where this demonic being was living. He goes into the otherwise abandoned home in t/early morning hours. He thinks he's alone; but then t/beast appears w/fangs bared. T/reporter grabs t/thick curtain covering a large window, pulling it away revealing early morning light. T/creature cowers & shrinks back to t/darkness.

Picture here.

**** Darkness becomes a fitting symbol in Scripture of sin and wickedness

Prov. 2:13 warns about "those who leave the paths of uprightness To walk in the ways of darkness;"

Eph. 5:8 for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light

I said ==>

- (b) Two things going on in these 3 verses
- i. 1st you have daylight likened to a blanket that shakes away evildoers
 - ii. Second poetic picture is in v. 14
- 14 "It [earth] is changed like clay under the seal; and they [wicked] stand forth like a garment.

* What does it mean that they earth is changed like clay under a seal?

In antiquity, a seal was a stamp that you could use to impress a 3-dimensional image on something, like clay. Picture a child using a plastic stamp to put a 3-D image on a piece of flattened playdough.

Imagine this from t/perspective of a culture w/o electricity. As t/sun comes up t/darkness turns to grey & features in t/landscape begin to take shape.

14a ... changed like clay under the seal ...

I love t/way Christopher Ash pulls all this together in his commentary on Job ==>

"... the Lord pictures that beautiful scene when you watch a dark landscape appear as first light dawns. From a gray two-dimensional nothingness, it takes shape, rather as flat clay becomes threedimensional when impressed with a seal, and its features become visible, and it has color and texture like a piece of clothing. What is the point and purpose of all this? The paradoxical "light," (v.15) of the wicked (which is darkness, for darkness is their preferred environment . . .) is "withheld" and the arm they lift up to threaten and harm is broken. All of which is a vivid poetic way of saying that every time the sunrises, it is evidence that there is a judgment to come. Every time the light is switched on in creation reassures us that darkness will not last forever. Each new day is cosmic proof that evil has no enduring place in the created order. Sure, it must be part of this creation for now; it has a place in God's purposes, albeit a strictly limited one. But it will not be with us forever. There will come a day when the sea (in this symbolic sense) will be no more (Revelation 21:1). The wheat and the weeds may need to grow together for the present; but the day of judgment will come, when the weeds will be burned and the wheat gathered into God's barns (Matthew 13:24-30).

Therefore, God sets B4 Job a vivid metaphorical portrait of t/glories of t/universe — a good creation that has been tainted by evil. G. has a purpose for that evil to exist for a time; only a time. Then that which began at the Cross will be consummated in final judgment & glory.

Tough Questions Melt in the Light of God's Nature.

- 2. Job's Experience: Have You? (38:12-30)
- a. Questions about Light and Darkness (38:12-15)
- b. Questions about Unexplored places (38:16-17)

16 "<u>Have you</u> entered into the springs of the sea or walked in the recesses of the deep? 17 "Have the gates of death been revealed to you, or have you seen the gates of deep darkness?

(1) Progression here

- V. 16 "Have you, Job, been to t/deepest parts of the sea"
- V. 17 "Have, Job, the very gates of death been revealed to you?" We go from t/deepest oceans to t/gates of Sheol (death/grave).

(2) These are two unexplored places by men

I said a few wks ago - I understand that only 5% of t/ocean has even been mapped, much less explored. Take t/Pacific. It's like outer space in reverse. With that perspective, t/maj. of t/earth is unexplored.

(3) Depths of the ocean are hard to fathom

Acc. to t/National Ocean Service (a govt. organ.): Deepest part of any ocean is in t/western Pacific. It's known as the Challenger Deep and is nearly 36k ft. deep. Named after the HMS Challenger, whose crew first sounded its depths in 1875. 36k feet is just short of 7 miles.

2020 a crew of 2 descended in a specially equipped submersible to t/bottom of C.D. They conducted a total of 6 dives in t/submersible which takes about 4 hours to go down, spends another 2 1/2 going along the bottom, before spending another 4 hours to come back up.

At just 650 ft beneath the surface, you enter t/twilight zone.

All light visible to the human eye has been filtered out & t/inky black water has dropped to just 4 degrees.

That's 650'. Imagine 36000.

There t/temp. hovers just above freezing, while the enormous weight of water above exerts a pressure equiv. to 8 tons per sq. in.

Yet, there are creatures that exist there. Why? For God's glory.

Woman named Durdana Ansari, a commander in t/British Royal Navy, accompanied t/pilot on a dive. Afterward, she said, "Going to the [Challenger Deep] has changed the way I think. It has changed the way that my mind works. You are a little drop in a huge ocean. . . . it has made me an even more humble person."

ISW - Job is being humbled as he's asked,

16 "<u>Have you</u> entered into the springs of the sea or walked in the recesses of the deep?

Tough Questions Melt in the Light of God's Nature.

(4) These are things related to land and sea that only God can do

Yesterday, I read about Jesus in Luke 5 . . .

Jesus was standing by t/lake of Gennesaret. He sees 2 unoccupied boats lying at the edge of the lake & he gets into one which happened to be Peter's. He takes t/boat out a little and teaches t/ppl from there.

Then he tells Peter to put down t/nets for a catch of fish.

Peter answers, "Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but I will do as You say and let down the nets."

They take in such a great catch that their nets began to break.

How does Peter react? He falls down at Jesus' feet, saying, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!"

Only God can direct t/fish of His sea into otherwise empty nets. Peter doesn't ask any ?s; he is humbled under t/weight of his own sinfulness.

Tough Questions Melt in the Light of God's Nature.

- 2. Job's Experience: Have You? (38:12-30)
- b. Questions about Unexplored places (38:16-17)
- (2) Second of which is the place of the dead
- 17 "Have the gates of death been revealed to you, or have you seen the gates of deep darkness?

(a) Progression

That's t/progression; from t/depths of t/sea to t/depths of Sheol. While we scratch t/surface of ocean exploration, there's no such thing with death. It is remains unexplored.

(b) Death is pictured as having gates which open for those who enter

GoD. are mentioned elsewhere in Script. Psalms & Isaiah. In NT t/equiv. is used in Matt. 16:18 where Jesus says that "the gates of Hades [death/Sheol] will not overpower" the CH.

(c) Death is a mystery — yet we all face it

Mass of humanity lives in defiance of that which they can't avoid.

We don't even talk a whole lot about it in t/CH. Generations ago, t/CH looked at central to its mission preparing people for death. In t/age of modern medicine & increasing life expectancies we have sanitized death from our brains.

It's still something people fear.

Bildad, back in chap. 14, writing of t/end of t/wicked: 14 "He is torn from the security of his tent, And they march him before the king of terrors.

That's death; "t/king of terrors." At least for those who don't know X.

(d) God's knowledge — his presence — reach to the deepest seas, the furthest space, and even to the depths of Hades & heights of heaven

Psalm 139:7-12 7 Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? 8 If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. 9 If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, 10 Even there

Your hand will lead me, And Your right hand will lay hold of me. 11 If I say, "Surely the darkness will overwhelm me, And the light around me will be night," 12 Even the darkness is not dark to You, and the night is as bright as the day. Darkness & light are alike to You

Tough Questions Melt in the Light of God's Nature.

- 2. Job's Experience: Have You? (38:12-30)
- a. Questions about Light and Darkness (38:12-15)
- b. Questions about Unexplored places (38:16-17)
- c. Questions about the Seasons and Weather (38:22-30)

Go thru these quickly . . .

(1) Expanse of the Earth (18)

18 "Have you understood the expanse of the earth? Tell Me, if you know all this.

(a) "all this" = "all that has been asked so far"

"From God's celestial perspective, somewhat analogous to the astronauts' view from the moon, the entire globe can be seen at once. To the earthbound Job such a viewpoint was unimaginable. He may have traveled a hundred miles or more, but still he was far from "understanding/comprehending" what was beyond the last mountain range or desert he had seen at the most distant point of his travels." [Robert L. Alden]

i. Speaking of astronauts . . .

Book titled "A Reluctant Icon: Letters to Neil Armstrong" by James R. Hansen, former NASA historian, says that "he was not a religious

man in any doctrinal sense at all" and that his mother, "a strongly devout evangelical Christian," could not accept that about her son.

According to the book, Armstrong said in an interview w/Walter Cronkite on CBS's Face t/Nation on Aug. 17, 1969 that he was "certainly not an atheist" but he did not elaborate further.

The book also says that according to Armstrong's brother Dean, Cronkite asked him on another occasion whether he felt closer to God while on the moon & Armstrong replied: "You know, Walter, sometimes a man just wants a good cigar."

Armstrong reportedly was a deist. Deism is the belief in the existence of a supreme being who does not intervene in the universe). https://www.reuters.com/article/factcheck-armstrong-bible/fact-check-neil-armstrong-refusing-to-swear-on-the-bible-is-not-proof-that-moon-landing-was-fake-idUSL1N2RG249

18 "<u>Have you</u> understood the expanse of the earth? Tell Me, if you know all this.

38:31–33 31 "Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades, Or loose the cords of Orion? 32 "Can you lead forth a constellation in its season, And guide the Bear with her satellites? 33 "Do you know the ordinances of the heavens, Or fix their rule over the earth?

From t/expanse of the earth ==>

(2) Light and Darkness (19-21)

19 "Where is the way to the dwelling of light? And darkness, where is its place, 20 that you may take it to its territory and that you may discern the paths to its home?

(a) More poetic language

Light & darkness are personified as having "homes."

Each comes from its dwelling to which it returns.

I think this is another allusion to daylight.

(3) Snow and Hail (22-23)

- 22 "<u>Have you</u> entered the storehouses of the snow, or have you seen the storehouses of the hail,
 - (a) Both snow and hail are pictured as having "storehouses"
 - (b) These have been (v. 23)
- 23 . . . reserved for the time of distress, for the day of war and battle?
 - i. Sounds like Elihu in chapter 37 (remember?)
- 37:6 "For to the snow He says, 'Fall on the earth,' and to the downpour and the rain, 'Be strong.'
- 37:13 "Whether for correction, or for His world, or for lovingkindness, He causes it [the weather] to happen.

ii. Here we have:

- 23 Which I have reserved for the time of distress, for the day of war and battle? (? connected to v. 22)
- * Hail in particular is a weapon God used to fight for his people

Was t/7th plague that fell on Egypt in an attempt to persuade Pharaoh to let Israel go free (Exo. 9). "The LORD hurled large hailstones" on the fleeing Amorites in Josh 10:11. 100 pound hailstones are recorded in Rev 16:21 as part of the plague of the 7th angel.

**Snow?

If you think snow can't be a messenger of judgment, ask Napoleon or Hitler who suffered great losses in the frigid snow of Russia.

- (3) Snow and Hail (22-23)
- (4) Lightening and East Winds (24)
- 24 "Where is the way that the light is divided, or the east wind scattered on the earth?
- (a) Some translators (NIV) take "light" to mean "lightening" Fits better with "east wind."

36:30, 32 (Elihu) 30 "Behold, He spreads His lightning about Him, And He covers the depths of the sea. 32 "He covers His hands with the lightning, And commands it to strike the mark.

- (5) Rain (25-27)
- 25 "Who has cleft a channel for the flood, or a way for the thunderbolt,
- (a) NAS has "flood" but this is better translated "rain" HCSB ("flooding rain")

(b) Purpose (26-27)

26 to bring rain on a land without people, on a desert without a man in it, 27 to satisfy the waste and desolate land and to make the seeds of grass to sprout?

i. Note that this rain falls in a deserted land

Even if no man is there, no habitation; yet G. sends his rain to water t/grasses (and sustain wildlife).

* God does this for his pleasure

John Piper: In "distant deserts millions of flowers [wil1] bloom, blush with vivid colors, give off a sweet fragrance and never be touched or seen or smelled by anybody but God! God, it seems, wanted Job to think about this very thing. . . . Creation praises God by simply being what it was created to be in all its incredible variety. And since most of the creation is beyond the awareness of mankind (in the reaches of space, and in the heights of mountains and at the bottom of the sea) it wasn't created merely to serve purposes that have to do with us. It was created for the enjoyment of God. . . .

One of the tragedies of growing up is that we get used to things. . . . What a wonderful experience it is when God grants us a moment in which we don't take anything for granted, but see the world as though it was invented yesterday. . . . We should pray for the eyes of children again, when they saw everything for the first time....These are the eyes we need to see the unending wisdom of God running through all the world." [John Piper, cited in Talbert, 207]

Also demonstrates G's love for us. What did Jesus say in Matt. 6? =>

30 "But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith!

Lastly ==>

- (6) Ice and Frost Father / Mother Metaphor (28-30)
- 28a "Has the rain a father?
- 28b [mother] Or who has begotten the drops of dew?
- 29 "From whose womb has come the ice? And the frost of heaven, who has given it birth? 30 "Water becomes hard like stone, and the surface of the deep is imprisoned.

(a) This is speaking directly against ancient paganism

i. One source ==>

"This may possibly be an allusion to and a polemic against the Canaanite myth that viewed rain as the semen of the gods, by which 'mother earth' supposedly bears her 'children,' the crops. [Bible Knowledge Commentary]

Jeremiah 14:22 Are there any among the idols of the nations who give rain? Or can the heavens grant showers? Is it not You, O LORD our God? Therefore we hope in You, For You are the one who has done all these things.

God's First Reply to Job: Not "Why" but "Who"

Tough questions melt in the light of God's nature.

Two Closing Thoughts . . .

1. Jesus Christ, as God, providentially controls all things.

Not only is He Creator (last time), but He is sustainer and governor. That is, He providentially controls creation.

He can interrupt our "inductive inference." Peter and the disciples gave up fishing. Their experience was that there was no fish. JC as G. redirected t/fish. Miracle.

He goes on in that passage to say ==>
10b . . . "Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men."

Their response?

11b . . .they left everything and followed Him.

Have you?

I Bow Down (Twila Paris)
You are Lord of creation
And Lord of my life
Lord of the land and the sea
You were Lord of the heavens
Before there was time
Lord of all lords You will be

Response?

We bow down

And we worship You Lord

2. Jesus conquered the "King of terrors" (death)

Earlier I said that death is one of those areas that remains unexplored. Not entirely accurate.

I have a good friend, much more than a friend, who died and came back to tell about it.

Heb. 2:14–15 14 Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

{invitation}