

Title: God's First Reply to Job: Not "Why" But "Who" (Part 3)

Number: 1123Job38.31-39.4(38)

Text: 38:39 - 39:4

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

Date: November 12, 2023

{Read Text / Prayer}

Job 38:31–39:4 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? 34 “Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, So that an abundance of water will cover you? 35 “Can you send forth lightnings that they may go And say to you, ‘Here we are’? 36 “Who has put wisdom in the innermost being Or given understanding to the mind? 37 “Who can count the clouds by wisdom, Or tip the water jars of the heavens, 38 When the dust hardens into a mass And the clods stick together? 39 “Can you hunt the prey for the lion, Or satisfy the appetite of the young lions, 40 When they crouch in their dens And lie in wait in their lair? 41 “Who prepares for the raven its nourishment When its young cry to God And wander about without food?

39:1 “Do you know the time the mountain goats give birth? Do you observe the calving of the deer? 2 “Can you count the months they fulfill, Or do you know the time they give birth? 3 “They kneel down, they bring forth their young, They get rid of their labor pains. 4 “Their offspring become strong, they grow up in the open field; They leave and do not return to them.

[i] God’s panorama of His creation stands in stark contrast to Job’s perception that the world is chaotic and out of control

But when ur life is falling apart, it’s easy to think that t/world is also. That’s not true. G. is demonstrating that to J. (among other things).

[ii] As we have embarked on God’s 2 speeches (chapters 38-41)—

We see G. in His creative genius.

J. can’t do what G. does // know what G. knows.

[iii] We can look at all the modern scientific advances & that becomes even more evident

G. speaks to Job as a man living in t/ANE. If t/creation was a marvel of order to him in t/2d mill BC, how much more is it for we who live at t/beg. of t/21st c. AD.

Modern scientific discoveries have buttressed t/truth that t/universe is an intricate machine—so intricate that it demands a designer.

We have not only t/means to look far out into space (lightyears), but we can go deep in t/other direction: the microscopic level.

At that level, Bruce Alberts of the National Academy of Sciences ==> “We have always underestimated the cell. . . . The entire cell can be viewed as a factory that contains an elaborate network of interlocking assembly lines, each of which is composed of a set of large protein machines. . . . Why do we call [them] machines? Precisely because, like machines invented by humans to deal efficiently with the macroscopic world, these protein assemblies contain highly coordinated moving parts.” [cited by Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator*, 193]

1 example is t/bacterial flagellum that serves as a motor to move cells. Molecular biochemist, Dr. Michael Behe, has said this of t/flagellum: “. . . it was discovered in 1973 that the flagellum performs like a rotary propeller . . . Just picture an outboard motor on a boat and you get a pretty good idea of how the flagellum functions, only the flagellum is far more incredible. The flagellum’s propeller is long and whiplike, made out of a protein called flagelin. This is attached to a drive shaft by hook protein, which acts as a universal joint, allowing the propeller and drive shaft to rotate freely. Several types of proteins act as bushing material to allow the drive shaft to penetrate the bacterial wall and attach to the rotary motor. . . . The whole system works really well—the flagellum’s propeller can spin at ten thousand revolutions per minute. . . Not only that . . . but the propeller can stop spinning within a quarter turn and instantly start spinning the other way at ten thousand rpms.” [cited by Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator*, 204-05]

We have drawings of these flagellum & they look like complex machines.

Cell itself is like a factory covering a city block or more — with intricate machines operating at G’s direction.

Greatness of R G.

What we see here as it relates to His role as Creator — only it’s at t/level of a primitive man like Job.

If Job lived today & was a scientist rather than a rancher, G. may ask him to consider His creation at t/levels we can see now.

[iv] Title / Main Idea / Outline

God's First Reply to Job: Not "Why" but "Who" (Part 3)

G. doesn't answer J's ?s of why he's suffering; rather, He shows J. that He is t/Great G. behind His suffering who loves Him & has a purpose for it.

Tough Questions Melt in the Light of God's Nature

BTIM - t/?s we have about how G. runs t/world fade when we get a glimpse of who He really is.

Some people unguardedly say things like, "When I see G. someday, I'm going to have a lot of ?s for Him." Trust me, you won't.

Tough Questions Melt in the Light of God's Nature

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)

[v] Dignity of man

Note that t/fact that God asks these questions speaks of man's unique dignity. Nowhere do we see the creation asked questions about the creation aside from man.

[vi] Here's what we covered last time . . .

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

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)

We move from Job's experience as compared to God's ==>

3. Job's Ability: Can You? (38:31-41)

G. here is demonstrating His omnipotence:

He can do anything in keeping w/His nature.

a. Questions about stars and clouds (38:31-38)

(1) Stars (31-33)

(a) These are constellations created on the 4th day (Gen. 1:16)

31 "Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades, or loose the cords of Orion? 32 "Can you lead forth a constellation [Mazzaroth] 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?

(b) Similar to what we saw back in ch. 9 (Job's reply to Bildad)

9:7-9 7 Who commands the sun not to shine, And sets a seal upon the stars; 8 Who alone stretches out the heavens And tramples down the waves of the sea; 9 Who makes the Bear, Orion and the Pleiades, And the chambers of the south;

i. Orion . . .

Constellation located in the winter skies toward t/N.

ii. The Pleiades . . .

Cluster of stars located in t/shoulder of t/bull in t/constellation Taurus.

iii. The Bear may refer to the Big or Little Dipper

(c) Note the verbs relating to Job's ability:

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?”

bind/loose/lead/guide/fix

Contrary to ancient Mesopotamian cosmology that believed a plurality of gods had inscribed t/stars on t/underside of a heavenly dome.

“These verses serve both as an apologetic for the uniqueness of God, as opposed to multiple celestial deities, and as proof of his creative artistry and control of all things terrestrial and celestial.”

[Robert L. Alden]

(d) These constellations were also associated with seasons of rain which would connect to what we saw last time

28 “Has the rain a father? Or who has begotten the drops of dew?”

3. Job's Ability: Can You? (38:31-41)

Isaiah 40:26 Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created these stars, The One who leads forth their host by number, He calls them all by name; because of the greatness of His might and the strength of His power, not one of them is missing.

“This most beautiful system of the sun, planets and comets, could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful Being.” [Isaac Newton]

Tough Questions Melt in the Light of God’s Nature

(2) Clouds (34-37)

34 “Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, so that an abundance of water will cover you? 35 “Can you send forth lightnings that they may go and say to you, ‘Here we are’?”

(a) Here the poetic picture is that the clouds and lightening operate at the beck and call of God

(b) Even the lightening is as God’s servant

Note that phrase “Here we are” in v. 35.

This is what we see in Exo. 3 & 1 Sam. 3 when G. calls to Moses & Samuel by name & they respond “Here I am!” Same words —

Only here in v. 35 it’s in t/plural ==>

35 “Can you send forth lightnings that they may go and say to you, ‘Here we are’?”

(c) Then there’s the question of v. 36

36 “Who has put wisdom in the innermost being or given understanding to the mind?”

i. Significant translation issue I can’t go into here

But if you’re using t/NIV you are no doubt puzzled:

NIV: 36 Who gives the ibis wisdom or gives the rooster understanding?

Far cry from what most other translations give:

36 “Who has put wisdom in the innermost being or given understanding to the mind?”

Words “wisdom”/“understanding” are clear. Other 2 are not & could be translated “ibis” (a bird) & “rooster.”

1 of those infrequent occasions in Scripture where we are not sure. Since this isn’t a college or seminary class I’ll leave it there.

(d) Word “wisdom” in v. 36 connects to the same word in v. 37
37a “Who can count the clouds by wisdom . . .

Implied answer: God. Rem. this relates to Job’s ability (inability). Only omnipotent/omniscient G. can number t/clouds that are always changing around t/world.

37b-38 37b . . . or tip the water jars of the heavens, 38 when the dust hardens into a mass and the clods stick together?

Beautif. poetic picture of rain coming down from water jars drenching t/hard desert dirt.

3. Job's Ability: Can You? (38:31-41)

Tough Questions Melt in the Light of God's Nature

a. Questions about stars and clouds (38:31–38)

b. Questions about the animal kingdom, part 1 (38:39–41)

(1) Remember Job's words in 12:7–10?

In t/midst of his suffering ==>

7 “But now ask the beasts, and let them teach you; And the birds of the heavens, and let them tell you. 8 “Or speak to the earth, and let it teach you; And let the fish of the sea declare to you. 9 “Who among all these does not know That the hand of the LORD has done this, 10 In whose hand is the life of every living thing, And the breath of all mankind?

(2) Now God speaks as the creator and sustainer of the animal kingdom

(a) These are largely non-domesticated animals (exception: horse)

Wouldn't be found on anyone's farm, much less Job's. Not tame or domesticated. They are not under human control, but God's.

(b) Nine animals listed from 38:39 to 39:30 (end of chapter)

Lion; raven; wild donkey; wild ox; ostrich; horse; hawk; eagle.

“With the exception of the war horse, these are all wild animals that live their lives totally independently of humans: they are of no service to humans, and humans are comparatively ignorant of their ways.”
[David J. A. Clines]

(3) Lions (38:39–40)

39 “Can you hunt the prey for the lion, or satisfy the appetite of the young lions, 40 when they crouch in their dens and lie in wait in their lair?”

(a) Lion = king of the beasts—natural to begin with him

i. O.T. refers to the lion several times

Account of Samson & t/lion in Judges 14 where he kills a young lion that attempted to attack him.

Lions were a danger to flocks. David recalls his killing a threatening lion to protect his sheep in 1 Sam 17:34–37.

4:11 [Eliphaz] “The lion perishes for lack of prey, And the whelps of the lioness are scattered.

ii. Here God asks Job:

39 “Can you hunt the prey for the lion, or satisfy the appetite of the young lions, 40 when they crouch in their dens and lie in wait in their lair?”

Psalm 104:21 The young lions roar after their prey And seek their food from God.

(4) Ravens (38:41)

41 **“Who prepares for the raven its nourishment when its young cry to God and wander about without food?”**

(a) Family of ravens includes 3 to 6 young birds

They are cared for by their parents who rarely leave them alone.

(b) Unlike the lion - ravens eat carrion

Yet it is G. who is t/author of their sustenance. True of all creation.

Psalm 104:14a He causes the grass to grow for the cattle . . .

Psalm 145:15–16 15 The eyes of all look to You, And You give them their food in due time. 16 You open Your hand And satisfy the desire of every living thing.

Psalm 147:9 He gives to the beast its food, And to the young ravens which cry.

Luke 12:24 “Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; they have no storeroom nor barn, and yet God feeds them; how much more valuable you are than the birds!”

(c) Objection

Someone may object and say that G. isn’t directly feeding anyone. It’s not like ancient Israel where manna fell from t/sky. There’s no lion manna or raven manna falling anywhere. No, t/female lion kills another animal in order to feed her young.

i. Doctrine of Concurrence

Grudem in his systematic theology (I’ve cited this before):

Concurrence is "[a]n aspect of God's providence whereby he cooperates with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do" [Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology]

Get that? [^]. God is t/ultimate or final cause of everything he actively ordains by direct action or passively ordains by permission.

Tough Questions Melt in the Light of God's Nature

I don't want you to miss the bigger picture . . .

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

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

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

"Were you there, Job, when I laid t/foundations of t/earth & brought t/sea forth to her earthly boundaries?"

2. Job's Experience: Have You? (38:12-30)

"Have you commanded t/morning? Have you entered into t/springs of t/sea? Have t/gates of death been revealed to you? Have you understood t/expanse of the earth?"

3. Job's Ability: Can You? (38:31-41)

"Can you keep t/constellations in their orbit? Can you command t/clouds, rain & lightning? Can you count how many clouds there are at any given moment? Can you provide food for t/lion or t/raven?"

Now we move into chapter 39 ==>

4. Job’s Knowledge: Do You Know? (39:1-4)

1 “Do you know the time the mountain goats give birth? Do you observe the calving of the deer?”

a. Mountain goats is literally “goats of the rock” (Some translations have “ibex”)

b. As far as mountain goats are concerned . . .

Shy & elusive, well-suited for life in a harsh mountain environment.

Their coat is light tan provides good camouflage against desert terrain.

Grown, they stand about 30” high at t/shoulders.

Bucks have long horns and weigh 130–200 pounds.

T/Doe has shorter horns & weighs 65–110 pounds.

2 “Can you count [better “consider”] the months they fulfill, or do you know the time they give birth? 3 “They kneel down, they bring forth their young, they get rid of their labor pains. 4 “Their offspring become strong, they grow up in the open field; they leave and do not return to them.

One source ==>

“Job did not even know when certain animals give birth to their young or did he know their gestation periods. Totally apart from man’s help or knowledge, but obviously under God’s supervision, mountain goats and deer bring forth their young, who soon grow up, leave their parents, and fend for themselves . . . This mountain goat may be the Nubian Ibex, a goat in the wilds of the Middle East that hides when it bears its young. Even now relatively few people have ever seen these goats when they are bearing their offspring.” [Bible Knowledge Commentary]

“The providence of God is certainly remarkable . . . In His wisdom and power, God supervises the whole universe and makes sure that His creatures are cared for. “You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing” [Psa. 145:16, I cited a moment ago]. We humans have a difficult time keeping the machinery of life operating successfully, but God runs the whole universe with such precision that we build our scientific laws on His creation.” [Warren W. Wiersbe]

Next time ==>

5. Job’s Impotence: Who is Almighty? (39:5-30)

3 closing points . . .

1. God is bigger than we can fathom.

He is sovereign over every molecule in t/universe. All things that exist & every action that occurs in creation subsists within His sov. control.

Yet, this is the God that we can know thru JC. We can know Him!

"When we speak of knowing God, it must be understood with reference to man's limited powers of comprehension. God, as He really is, is far beyond man's imaginations, let alone his understanding. God has revealed only so much of Himself as our minds can conceive and the weakness of our nature can bear."

[John Milton - 1608-1674]

God's First Reply to Job: Not “Why” But “Who”

Tough Questions Melt in the Light of God’s Nature

"How exceedingly presumptuous it is . . . to inquire into the cause of the divine will, which is in fact, and is justly entitled to be, the cause of everything that exists. For if it has any cause, then there must be something antecedent on which it depends; which it is impious to suppose. For the will of God is the highest rule of justice, so that what He wills must be considered just, for this very reason, because he wills it. When it is inquired therefore why the Lord did so, the answer must be, Because he would. But if you go further and ask why he so determined, you are in search of something greater and higher than the will of God, which can never be found." [Calvin, Institutes, 3.23.2]

Not "Why" but "Who"

Proverbs 30:3–4 3 Neither have I learned wisdom, Nor do I have the knowledge of the Holy One. 4 Who has ascended into heaven and descended? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has wrapped the waters in His garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His name or His son's name? Surely you know!

1. God is bigger than we can fathom.

2. God's faithfulness is bigger than we can fathom.

"The cross permits us to experience God's faithfulness and gives us hope for the future." [Calvin Institutes 3.8.3]

Lamentations 3:21–23 21 This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope. 22 The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail. 23 They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.

What about suffering?

“Is it possible that in the counsel of God this age is so ordered that suffering for some is necessary for the survival of others [think lion and raven]? Is this process of predation also a pointer to a deeper truth, perhaps even the true of redemptive suffering, that the day will come [from Job’s perspective] when the suffering of one innocent man will be God’s means to bring life to a whole redeemed community?” [Ash, 394]

God demonstrated His faithfulness in the suffering of Another.

Bring us ==>

3. God’s work on the Cross is far-greater than we can fathom

God’s justice and love — life and death — intersect at the Cross. x2

Think about t/life/death cycle. To live is to one day die.

Ecclesiastes 3:1–2a 1 There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven— 2a A time to give birth and a time to die . . .

So even life speaks of death.

Where does the lion or the raven get their food? At the expense of other life. The lion kills another animal and feeds her young. The raven feeds her young on the left-over carrion.

Death is an unnatural intrusion into life.

Suffering / death have been conquered by t/Cross of JC.

Job was event. resc. from t/town dump, where he was back in chpt. 2.
Another town dump that we are rescued from, t/Valley of Hinnom.

T/Hinnom Valley ran along t/south & west of Jerusalem & served as
t/city's garbage dump. T/gate at the south of t/city which opened into
t/valley was called t/"Potsherd Gate" as people carried their broken
pieces of pottery & other refuse through this gate to throw it in the
Hinnom Valley.

Fires regularly burned there. T/Grk. equivalent is t/word "Gehenna."
Gehenna is translated "hell" in our English Bibles.

When Jesus warned about t/fires of Gehenna everyone understood
t/picture. Gehenna stunk of death.

What is death but an unnatural intrusion into God's good creation?

T/lioness kills an innocent animal to feed her young. T/rotting
leftovers become food for t/raven and her brood.

Who would ever thought that out of death would come life?

That's t/Cross where Jesus died to overcome t/stench of hell. It's
where God's justice and mercy meet. It's where death is overcome by
life—t/resurrection of X from death.

We, like Job, can be rescued from t/Valley of Hinnom thru work of
JC. Comes by faith and repentance . . .