

Title: God's First Reply to Job: Not "Why" But "Who" (Part 4)

Number: 1123Job39.5-40:2(39)

Text: 39:5-40:2

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

Date: November 19, 2023

{Read Text / Prayer}

39:5–12 5 “Who sent out the wild donkey free? And who loosed the bonds of the swift donkey, 6 To whom I gave the wilderness for a home And the salt land for his dwelling place? 7 “He scorns the tumult of the city, The shoutings of the driver he does not hear. 8 “He explores the mountains for his pasture And searches after every green thing. 9 “Will the wild ox consent to serve you, Or will he spend the night at your manger? 10 “Can you bind the wild ox in a furrow with ropes, Or will he harrow the valleys after you? 11 “Will you trust him because his strength is great And leave your labor to him? 12 “Will you have faith in him that he will return your grain And gather it from your threshing floor?

39:26–40:2 26 “Is it by your understanding that the hawk soars, Stretching his wings toward the south? 27 “Is it at your command that the eagle mounts up And makes his nest on high? 28 “On the cliff he dwells and lodges, Upon the rocky crag, an inaccessible place. 29 “From there he spies out food; His eyes see it from afar. 30 “His young ones also suck up blood; And where the slain are, there is he.” 1 Then the LORD said to Job, 2 “Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty? Let him who reproves God answer it.”

[i] This is the last part — part 4 — of God’s first reply to Job

G’s role as creator & sustainer of the universe, from t/deepest space, to creatures of t/land & sea—all are dependent upon Him 4 their being

[ii] Title / Main Idea / Outline

God’s First Reply to Job: Not “Why” but “Who”

J. had lots of ?s of “why?” (1st 3:11). Why did calamity fall upon him? // suffering // what did I do to deserve all this.

G. never answers t/? of “why.” He points him to “Who” // Himself as t/Omnip./Omniprsnt./Omniscient/Good/Loving/Sovereign/Holy God.

Just as G. has purpose & direction for His creation, He also has a purpose & design for your individual life — even when that incl. suff.

Big Pic. Idea: *Tough Questions Melt in the Light of God’s Nature*

BTIM - t/?s we have about how G. runs t/world fade away when we see Him in His power and majesty.

That was something I couldn’t see in my suffering over t/loss of my daughter. G. was patient w/me - merciful. I’m sure that had He appeared to me as He did Job, my ?s would have melted away.

Walking w/Him thru this over time, many of those sharp ?s

& accusations have faded.

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)

“Were you there, Job, when I laid t/foundations of t/earth; when My angels celebrated in my glory?”

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? Have you commanded t/rain? What about t/lightening that strikes each mark at My command?”

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

“Can you keep t/constellations in their orbit? Can you command t/clouds—or count them? Can you provide food for t/lion or t/raven?”

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

”Do you know t/time of birth for deer and mountain goats? Do you know how these things that you consider natural operate at my command?”

Immensity of G. who holds t/galaxies in t/palm of his hand
& yet knows every intricate detail of our lives.

Here is where we pick it up at the last point ==>

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

a. Questions about the animal kingdom, continued (39:5-30)

Remind you that this is poetry. We're not getting a scientific treatise on animal behavior. This is phenomenological. BTIM - it's a poetic description based on observation—in keeping w/G's decree & design.

10 animals listed in this first reply (said “9” last week).

We looked at 4 of them last time. We pick up t/list with t/5th in v. 5.

(1) The Wild Donkey: Independent Existence (39:5–8)

5 “Who sent out the wild donkey free? And who loosed the bonds of the swift donkey, 6 to whom I gave the wilderness for a home and the salt land for his dwelling place?”

(a) The Wild donkey [onager] was not domesticated

Had a temperament unsuitable for domestic use. Feeding on brush & grass, this donkey lived in t/unpopulated salt lands.

Modern onager is as fast as a horse, reaching speeds over 40 MPH.

Likely true for those of Job’s day.

Today, in northwestern India, there is a salty clay desert of more than 10,000 square miles, that is t/sole habitat of t/asiatic onager.

(b) See his Independence (vv. 7-8)

7 “He scorns the tumult of the city [some transl. have “laughs at”], the shoutings of the driver he does not hear. 8 “He explores the mountains for his pasture and searches after every green thing.

i. Same Hebrew word translated “scorns” or “laughs at” is used by Eliphaz in promising Job’s restoration

5:22 “You will laugh at violence and famine, and you will not be afraid of wild beasts.” [Such as those described here]

ii. Wild donkey is oblivious to civilization or human control

(i) Descriptive of Hagar’s son Ishmael (father of the Arabs)

Genesis 16:12 “He will be a wild donkey of a man, his hand will be against everyone, and everyone’s hand will be against him . . .

(c) We’ve seen references to the Wild Donkey before in Job

6:5 “Does the wild donkey bray over his grass?”(asks Job rhetorically)

11:12 [Zophar] “An idiot will become intelligent when the foal of a wild donkey is born a man.”

24:5 [Job] “Behold, as wild donkeys in the wilderness they [mistreated orphans and widows] go forth seeking food in their activity . . .”

(d) Uncontrolled, independent of all — except God who controls him

“Who created this beast, Job, to be as he is? Job, Who is Almighty?”

(2) The Wild Ox: Fearsome Power (39:9–12)

9 “Will the wild ox consent to serve you, or will he spend the night at your manger? 10 “Can you bind the wild ox in a furrow with ropes, or will he harrow the valleys after you?”

(a) Generally identified today as the aurochs (Bos primigenius)

Ancestor of most of our modern cattle; now extinct (last specimen said to have died: 1627). Massive w/curved horns, they were about 10' long, weighing over a ton. Some bulls more than 6' wide at shoulders!

(b) As for verse 10

de Wilde reports Palestinian farmers calling out to their oxen “stay in the furrow!” / “go in the furrow!” That was t/domesticated ox!

Can J. imag. tying a team of W.O. to t/plow to make straight furrows?

(c) He was a legendary terror

In Psalm 22:21 David puts being rescued ‘from the horns of the wild oxen’ alongside being saved ‘from the mouth of the lion.’

When t/prophet Balaam spoke of how God fights for Israel w/devastating power, he says that God ‘is for them like the horns of the wild ox’ (Num. 23:22; 24:8).

(d) Such a massive beast could not be trusted (vv. 11-12)

11 “Will you trust him because his strength is great and leave your labor to him? 12 “Will you have faith in him that he will return your grain and gather it from your threshing floor?”

“There is therefore a wild irony in this description. ‘Why not try this?’ God asks the farmer Job. ‘Go into the wild and find a wild ox. Walk up to it, pat its head, let it eat some food out of your hand, talk to it, be an ‘ox whisperer,’ lead it quietly back to the farm to feed overnight at your feeding trough. Then watch as it bows its meek head to let you put a harness on it and willingly plods with its docile strength ‘after you.’” [Christopher Ash, 396-97] Would be absurd and suicidal

T/wild ox will not submit to man, but according to v. 8, he serves Almighty G.

5. *Job’s Impotence: Who is Almighty? (39:5-30)*
Tough Questions Melt in the Light of God’s Nature

(3) The Ostrich: Humorous Indifference (39:13–18)

(a) The ostrich gets lots of attention here (6 verses) — second only to the warhorse

i. Curious addition that almost seems out of place

Interestingly, this section was skipped over by t/translators of t/LXX. Some modern scholars believe it to be an interpolation (no rhetorical ?s). But there's no Heb. MS evid. for this.

Then again, why would someone add something so odd?

Best to trust t/evidence that t/ostrich was part of G's reply to Job in this panorama of t/animal K.D.

Plus, I believe t/ostrich here points to G's sense of humor. Whimsy.

(b) Word Ostrich translates a word that can mean “shrill cries”

Word found nowhere else in t/OT. Only here in our passage.

But we know from t/context that we're talking ostrich here.

(c) This humorous bird was well known to the ANE

Found in desert regions of Syria, Arabia, Palestine, & Africa.

Often depicted in rock art. Interestingly — ostriches were kept in Egyptian zoos as long as 2000 BC!

Largest of all birds. Males can reach 8' in hght & weigh 200 - 300 lbs. They live in flocks of 5 to 50, normally in t/company of grazing animals like antelope / zebra.

Male ostrich has an unusual voice. It has a deep roar like a lion with a strange hissing sound.

Second only to t/cheetah, t/ostrich is capable of speeds up to 50 mph!

13 “The ostriches’ wings flap joyously with the pinion and plumage of love,

(d) Note the last part of the verse [^]

i. Some translations have something quite different

NIV: 13 “The wings of the ostrich flap joyfully, though they cannot compare with the wings and feathers of the stork.

HCSB frames this as a ?: 13 The wings of the ostrich flap joyfully, but are her feathers and plumage like the stork’s?

(i) Heb. קָסִיפָה is normally translated stork

My Hebrews skills are lacking, so I can’t say much more than that. But I think “stork” makes more sense, so I would go with the NIV.

13 “The wings of the ostrich flap joyfully, though they cannot compare with the wings and feathers of the stork.

Obv. they can’t cf. because t/ostrich can’t fly, for 1 thing.

(3) *The Ostrich: Humorous Indifference (39:13–18)*

(e) Indifference is seen in vv. 14-17

14 For she abandons her eggs to the earth and warms them in the dust, 15 And she forgets that a foot may crush them, or that a wild beast may trample them.

In the wild, up to 90% of ostrich nests are destroyed by predators.

16 “She treats her young cruelly, as if they were not hers; though her labor be in vain, she is unconcerned; 17 because God has made her forget wisdom, and has not given her a share of understanding.

i. Lamentations 4:3 speaks of the cruelty of the ostrich:

“Even jackals offer the breast, They nurse their young; But the daughter of my people has become cruel Like ostriches in the wilderness.”

ii. The stupidity of the ostrich is notorious

Arab proverb: “more stupid than an ostrich.”

1st c. ancient Roman naturalist Pliny thought it was because it would thrust its head into a bush & think its whole body was concealed (Natural History 10.1.2).

(Ostrich, contrary to cartoon depictions I well-rem. as a child, does not plunge its head in a hole in t/ground.)

iii. What is the cause of the ostrich’s foolishness?

17 . . . God has made her forget wisdom, and has not given her a share of understanding.

Not that she once was wise and forgot, but that she never really had it!
Wise old owl? Never see a depiction of t/wise old ostrich!

(f) Humorous?

Just look at this bird! Why would G. make a bird that can't fly?
Contradiction in terms!

Yet, look at v. 18 ==>

18 “When she lifts herself on high, she laughs at the horse and his rider.

Can't fly, but can outrun a horse! Picture a cartoon ostrich out-pacing a horse, turning it's long neck around, sneering!

(g) Ostrichfestival.com

My old hometown of Chandler, AZ is looking forward to it's 35th annual Ostrich Festival next yr. Chandler in its wild-west days was home to ostrich ranches. Were prized for t/feathers & meat (delicacy).

If you want to see humorous, go online and watch a man riding an ostrich like a horse (races).

Speaking of horses . . .

(4) The War Horse: Dark and Terrible (39:19–25)

(a) Just listen to the poetic majesty of this, the longest animal description, from the CSB:

Many call this section, “The most brilliant of all the animal depictions in these chapters.” One writer calls it “an eerie and haunting picture.”

39:19–25 19 Do you give strength to the horse? Do you adorn his neck with a mane? 20 Do you make him leap like a locust? His proud snorting fills one with terror. 21 He paws in the valley and rejoices in his strength; he charges into battle. 22 He laughs at fear, since he is afraid of nothing; he does not run from the sword. 23 A quiver rattles at his side, along with a flashing spear and a javelin. 24 He charges ahead with trembling rage; he cannot stand still at the sound of the trumpet. 25 When the trumpet blasts, he snorts defiantly. He smells the battle from a distance; he hears the officers' shouts and the battle cry.

(b) This is a war-horse (v. 21-25)

Mounted with a rider or pulling a chariot, this was t/Abrams Tank of its day.

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

19 **“Do you give the horse his might? Do you clothe his neck with a mane? 20 “Do you make him leap like the locust? His majestic snorting is terrible.**

i. Going forward into Israel's history there were notable instances of frightful experiences with war horses

Pursuit by the pharaoh's chariots during t/Exodus.

Defeat at t/hands of foreign armies with their chariots.

Perhaps Sabians & Chaldeans rode upon such horses when they ravaged Job's estate back in chapt. 1.

[c] Mane (v. 19)

Symbol of its might, just as Samson's hair was of his strength.

I've only ridden a horse 1x. Back when I was around 30, we went to a stable. There were 4 of us. They brot t/horses out 1 by 1. Signif. animals. Then, saving t/best for last, they brot out this Clydsdale to haul me around. Wasn't quite as big then. But I was astonished at how this horse could carry a then 250lb. man w/ease.

That was no war horse like this 1 ==>

21 "He paws in the valley, and rejoices in his strength; he goes out to meet the weapons. 22 "He laughs at fear and is not dismayed; and he does not turn back from the sword. 23 "The quiver rattles against him, the flashing spear and javelin.

(d) He laughs at fear!

Just like t/fast ostrich laughs at horse & rider in v. 18

Just like t/donkey at t/noise of t/city in v. 7.

i. He is unafraid!

24 "With shaking and rage he races over the ground, and he does not stand still at the voice of the trumpet. 25 "As often as the trumpet sounds he says, 'Aha!' and he scents the battle from afar, and the thunder of the captains and the war cry.

(e) Listen to how one writer paints the picture ==>

"He is a massively powerful creature. For many centuries a warhorse whether carrying a warrior rider or pulling a chariot, was the epitome of ultimate power; it was the nuclear weapon of most past centuries.

We must expel from our minds all pictures of domesticity or tameness. His neck is clothed ‘with a mane’ (v. 19b). The word ‘mane’ is normally derived from the root ‘to thunder;’ his mane speaks of almost divine power. He can leap and jump with astonishing power; picture a locust scaled up many times (v. 20a)! When he snorts in anger, there is a dark majesty that ‘is terrifying’ (v. 20), giving to those watching a foretaste of the terror that comes from being in the presence of death and the God who can send body and soul into Hell.”

“Then in v. 21 we see him on the verge of battle, ready to charge, pawing the ground eagerly with his front feet, hyper-confident in his strength, itching to be let loose against the weapons of the enemy. He has no fear and experiences no terror or dismay (v. 22a); you will not see him fleeing from ‘the sword’ of the enemy’ (v. 22b). Picture him as he charges, with ‘the quiver’ rattling against his flanks, ‘the flashing spear’ and ‘javelin’ against his side (v. 23). Feel the power of his ‘fierceness and rage’ as he metaphorically eats up the ground in his charge (v. 24a). When the trumpet sounds’ for war, you cannot hold him back (v. 24b), for he cries ‘Aha!’ with joy that now, at last, he can do what he was created for, which is to bring death and destruction (v. 25).” [Ash, 399]

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

Tough Questions Melt in the Light of God’s Nature

(5) The Hawk: Graceful Flight (v. 26)

(a) This is the first of two birds of prey (eagle)

26 **“Is it by your understanding that the hawk soars, stretching his wings toward the south? Migrating to the south.**

(6) The Eagle: Life, Death (27–30)

(a) The word can mean “eagle” or “vulture”

Good case can be made that “vulture” is in mind here [LXX / NEB]
We will go with the vast majority of translations that read “eagle.”

27 “Is it at your command that the eagle mounts up and makes his nest on high?”

(b) This majestic bird functions at the command of God!

i. “Command” lit. “Mouth”

[c] Then beginning in v. 28:

28 “On the cliff he dwells and lodges, upon the rocky crag, an inaccessible place. 29 “From there he spies out food; his eyes see it from afar.

Eagles build their nests high on t/cliffs; G. granted them keen eyesight so they can see t/prey from afar, swoop down, & capture it

30 “His young ones also suck up blood; and where the slain are, there is he.”

(d) That last line may be what Jesus alludes to in Matt. 24:28:
“Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.”

(e) There's no attempt to sanitize the scene

We see these majestic animals that speak of life, but we also see death
Horse smells t/blood of battle and shouts "Aha!"

The eagle captures live prey so that her eaglets can suck up their blood

This isn't t/sort of picture we hang on our walls or that adorns our calendars. This is a brutal in-your-face portrait of life & death.

Reminder that t/creation is fallen, in spite of her beauty.

As if G. were saying to J.: "I alone am Shaddai. And you can't have life w/o death. Any plan of mine is going to encompass life, death, joy, suffering. But one day all sin and evil will be overcome by good." Points us to the Cross of X which is t/pinnacle / apogee of life/death/suffering/life/victory over suffering & death. Cross where J. died; t/C. empty, J. glorified!

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

Tough Questions Melt in the Light of God's Nature

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)

C. God's Closing Argument (40:1-2)

1. Note the two words for God here

1 Then the LORD [YHWH] said to Job, 2 "Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty [Shaddai]? Let him who reproves God answer it."

2. Similar to what we saw during God’s Opening Statement
38:1–3 **1 Then the LORD [YHWH] answered Job from the whirlwind. He said: 2 Who is this who obscures my counsel with ignorant words? 3 Get ready to answer me like a man; when I question you, you will inform me.**

Here (40:2) t/Lord asks Job whom He describes as a “faultfinder” if he wants to continue to contend with t/One who is “Almighty”

“Are you up for an answer, Job?”

As in a court dispute, either Job will have to admit t/truth of his opponent’s reply (G.) or he will have to offer some new arguments.

We’ll take a closer look at how Job responds. Next time.

Closing Thoughts . . .

1. Tough questions melt in the light of God’s nature.

I hope our trek thru these chapters has led you to think more about t/Who who ordains all that is your life, than t/?s you have about ur life

Here is a man, Job, who lost his wealth, his reputation, his children, & his health. G. says, in summary, “I know what I am doing; in t/cosmos as well as in your life.”

“We may not always see the signs of God’s goodness in our immediate circumstances, but what we see is not all there is. That is a

significant part of God’s answer to Job.” [Talbert, 206]

We need to be patient. As Ash writes ==>

“The problem with time is the waiting. As every human mother who has been granted a safe birth knows, there is a waiting for conception, there is a waiting and hoping during gestation, there are all manner of pains of pregnancy and labor, but in the end there is life and joy. If this is true for mountain goats, how much more is it true for human beings in pain struggling to remain believers. [citing another] ‘Yahweh’s veiled answer’ to Job ‘is that the rhythm of times which governs the perilous birth cycles of shy creatures also operates for human beings. If Job does not know the function of regular times in the natural cycle of things, he can scarcely appreciate the implications of proposing a time out of time when a mortal would return from the dead for personal vindication.’”

Ash continues: “And yet, the time would come when days, months, and years of hatred and evil, indeed the apparent ultimate victory of that evil, will be reversed in one glorious morning of new life. Job needs to learn—and we need to learn—to entrust ourselves to the righteous Lord of time.” [Ash, 395]

2. God delights in His creation—even in its fallen state.

One commentator:

“This view of a few of the world’s fauna demonstrates that Job, unable to contend with creation, hardly qualified to condemn the Creator. At the same time these words point up God’s delight in His creation. His stars and angels sang and shouted when He made the earth (38:7), and He apparently enjoys His animal world.” [BKC]

“Yahweh has filled his created world with a vast variety of life forms, each with its own qualities and peculiarities, in which he evidently takes a delight.” [Clines]

Morning stars sang together & sons of G. shouted for joy (38:7)!

He watches as He keeps t/stars in their orbit (38:31-32).

He satisfies t/Lion and Raven (38:39-41).

T/wild oxen serve Him (39:9).

He finds humor in t/ostrich (39:13) & majesty in t/horse (39:20).

T/wild oxen serve Him (39:8) & t/eagle flies at His command (39:27).

Next time you look to t/stars, see a herd of deer, or visit t/zoo, marvel at their uniqueness; chuckle as you see t/ostrich; marvel at t/Lion. Think “G. has ordained all of this for your pleasure & His.”

How much greater will it be when all of creation is set free!

In Romans 8 ==>

22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.

19 For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

Context: 18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Suffering of creation . . . and ours.

3. If God so enjoys the animal world, how much more people created in his image?

Isaiah 43:6b–7 6b “Bring My sons from afar and My daughters from the ends of the earth, 7 Everyone who is called by My name, and whom I have created for My glory, whom I have formed, even whom I have made.”

4. If people are created for God’s glory, how much more so those of us who have been re-created in Christ!

1 Corinthians 10:31 Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

5. If the redeemed bring God glory, we ought to be driven to reach the lost so that they may be added to the chorus.

Luke 15:7 - heaven rejoices when a sinner repents. G. rejoices!

Back to the Cross.

If you are a believer in JC, take heart ==>

“Do you believe that your sins are forgiven, and that Christ has made a full atonement for them? Then what a joyful Christian you ought to be! How you should live above the common trials and troubles of the world! Since sin is forgiven, can it matter what happens to you now? Luther said, "Smite, Lord, smite, for my sin is forgiven; if thou hast but forgiven me, smite as hard as thou wilt"; and in a similar spirit you may say, "Send sickness, poverty, losses, crosses, persecution, what thou wilt, thou hast forgiven me, and my soul is glad."
[Spurgeon]

If UR not, heed t/words of t/Geneva Reformer, John Calvin==>

"Let us, then, not be deceived by empty confidence. Even though we consider ourselves either equal or superior to other men, that is nothing to God, to whose judgment the decision of the matter must be brought. But if our wildness cannot be tamed by these warnings, he will answer us as he spoke to the Pharisees: "Ye are they that justify yourselves before men; but ... what is exalted among men is an abomination to God" [Luke 16:15, cf. Vg.]. Go now and haughtily boast of your righteousness among men, while God from heaven abominates it!" [Calvin, Institutes]

Problem for so many is that they don't see their sin.

Author and speaker, Jerry Bridges, who toiled for many years working w/young people thru t/ministry of t/Navigators, was asked shortly before he died, "What is t/biggest challenge working w/youth today?" His response? They don't see their sinfulness.

Tru of most today. Until t/H.S. shows them that t/standard b4 t/consuming fire that is G. in His holiness, is His holiness.

We're not holy. We're sinful. You're not holy. I don't care how good you think you are (rem. Calvin's words?).

"Go now and haughtily boast of your righteousness among men, while God from heaven abominates it!"

T/Person & Work of JC is R only remedy.

His person.... | His work...