

“The LORD Answered”

Job 38:1-39:30

We find here the beginning of Jehovah’s answer to Job. What we don’t often see, however, is that He is answering more than just Job. Remember, Job’s three friends were still there, as well as Elihu – they were party to Jehovah’s response for, as it says in verse one, “Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind” – all that were there heard His reply.

The answer Job had asked for had finally come – the LORD was now speaking – but, as is the case in our prayer life today, the answer wasn’t exactly what Job expected. The answer may not have been what was expected, but Job did recognize it was the answer. What did happen, as will be seen later, is that the answer had a positive effect on Job, as the answers we received from the Lord in prayer should do.

Job 31:35

³⁵ Oh that one would hear me! behold, my desire is, that the Almighty would answer me, and that mine adversary had written a book.

God answers with some very great and wonderful truths about who He is, and how much greater He is than man. He does this with a series of many questions, asked in a way that needs no answer – in fact, in a way that no answer could be given. We’ll break these down into an outline simply for the sake of our study, but keep in mind that they are all speaking of the same thing – God is far greater than man.

I. INTRODUCTION – THE LORD PRESENTS HIMSELF TO JOB – 38:1-4

A. Verses one through three are an introduction, of sorts, to not just these two chapters under our review, but for the following two as well (chapters 38-41 together).

B. Vs. 1a – “Then the LORD answered Job”

1. The verse begins, as many do in Hebrew, with a verb followed by its subject and then the object – וַיַּעַן-יְהוָה אֶת-אִיּוֹב.
2. The somewhat uniqueness here some consider to be in that Job is specifically addressed. In most (but not all) of the discourses prior to this text the portion would read something similar to, “And Bildad answered...,” without naming the person being addressed. The significance here is that it could be one of the others that were there may have started to answer Elihu, but God intervened.

“It is remarked, with reason, that the special mention of Job as the person answered “implies that another speaker had intervened” (Wordsworth)... (as found in Pulpit Commentary).

C. Vs. 1b – “Out of the whirlwind” - מִן הַסְּעָרָה

1. “Out of” – indicating a place of location – God was in the whirlwind itself, speaking to Job.
2. Although the word for “whirlwind” here is not the same as was found in the previous chapter (37:9) – “out of the south cometh

the whirlwind” (סִיּוּף) – the use of the definite article would point to a storm that was already on Job’s mind, one that was previously mentioned, and that could only be in the previous chapter. The word used here is a bit more descriptive of the storm than the one in the previous chapter – Dr. Strong has this defined as a hurricane.

3. The use of the “whirlwind” by the LORD seems to be clearly connected with the previous text that Elihu gave as describing the might of the LORD. Some seem to think that there was actually an approaching storm that was used to visually enhance the descriptions given.

“The tempest; the storm - probably that which Elihu had seen approaching, Job 37:21-24. God is often represented as speaking to people in this manner. He spake amidst lightnings and tempests on Mount Sinai Exo. 19:16-19, and he is frequently represented as appearing amidst the thunders and lightnings of a tempest, as a symbol of his majesty; compare Psa. 18:9-13; Hab. 3:3-6.” (Barnes)

D. Vs. 2 finds the first question asked by the LORD – in fact it is the first thing said by Him to Job, or to the others with him.

1. מִי זֶה – “Who is this” – the verse begins with a interrogative (a question) and a pronoun. When this combination is used, the pronoun used here is quite often used like an adverb – “Who then” – “It is

attached enclitically [a word closely connected with the preceding word], almost as an adv., to certain words, esp. interrog. pronouns, to impart, in a manner often not reproducible in Engl. idiom, directness and force, bringing the question or statement made into close relation with the speaker" (B-D-B).

2. "That darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge"

- a) "That" – who – "darkeneth" – these two words are verb participle – מְהַשְׁכֵּחַ – this is being used figuratively and carries the idea of darkening by obscuring or confusing counsel given.

"Which by seeking out the secret counsel of God by man's reason, makes it more obscure, and shows his own folly." (Geneva Bible notes)

Going back to the previous verse, and the indication given that someone began speaking and the LORD interrupted him, we see that point again in the use of the participle here. "[F]avours the assumption that Job has uttered such words immediately before, and is interrupted by Jehovah, without an intervening speaker having come forward" (B-D-B).

- b) "Counsel" – תַּעֲצָוָה – advice, plan – "God's counsel. For the great matter of the dispute between Job and his friends, was concerning God's counsel and providence in afflicting Job; which Job had endeavoured to obscure and misrepresent. This first word which God spoke, struck Job

to the heart. This he repeats and echoes to, Job 42:3, as the arrow that stuck fast in him" (Wesley).

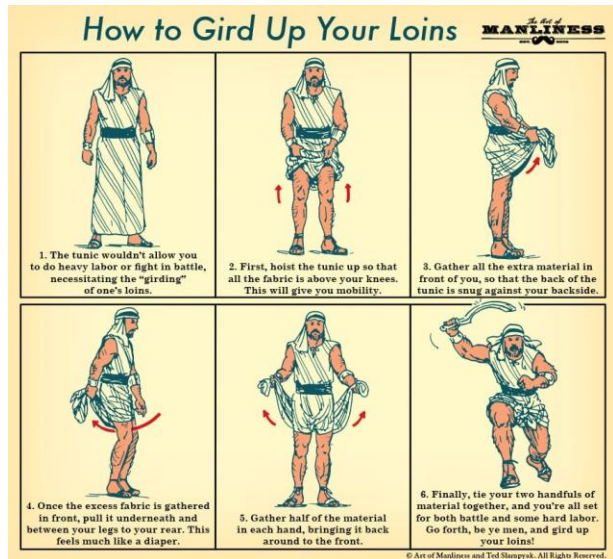
- c) "By words without knowledge" – trying to defeat the counsel of God with the empty words of man's languages, with man's knowledge, is, at best, foolish, and in its essence, an affront to the divine will of the Almighty.

"Who, where, is he that darkens counsel thus by words without knowledge? Let him show his face if he dare, and stand to what he has said." Note, Darkening the counsels of God's wisdom with our folly is a great affront and provocation to God. Concerning God's counsels we must own that we are without knowledge. They are a deep which we cannot fathom; we are quite out of our element, out of our aim, when we pretend to account for them. Yet we are too apt to talk of them as if we understood them, with a great deal of niceness and boldness; but, alas! we do but darken them, instead of explaining them. We confound and perplex ourselves and one another when we dispute of the order of God's decrees, and the designs, and reasons, and methods, of his operations of providence and grace. A humble faith and sincere obedience shall see further and better into the secret of the Lord than all the philosophy of the schools, and the searches of science, so called. This first word which God spoke is the more observable because Job, in his repentance, fastens upon it as that which silenced and humbled him, Job 42:3." (Matthew Henry)

E. Vs. 3 is a very dramatic verse and sets the tone for what is to come. In essence, God is saying to Job, "If you're so smart,

if you're so good, if you think you know all that is knowable, then stand up like a man and lets debate the issue." In a simpler way, "Man up."

1. "Gird up now thy loins like a man"
 - a) "Gird up now" – equip yourself, clothe yourself for battle, prepare yourself
 - b) "Thy loins"



- c) "Like a man" – the word for man (גִּבּוֹר) is one that means strong man, warrior, emphasizing strength or ability to fight (B-D-B). Get ready for battle.
2. "For I will demand of thee" – I will question you – the word used (אָשַׁאׁל) is one that can mean simply to ask, but, within the context, can be seen as a stern demand (which is the case here). The next clause

shows this – the use of the volitional form of this verb is to require an action, hence its translation, “I will demand.”

3. “And answer thou me”

- a) The root of the verb here – יָדַע – is one that, in its base meaning, means to know, to learn. The stem used (Hiphil) puts the meaning as causative. The LORD is telling Job that, when the time comes for him to answer, He wanted him to “cause me to know your answer – cause me to know your reasoning.”
- b) This is not suggestive, and although the many questions to follow are to be seen as rhetorical in nature, the LORD expected Job to reply – He really did want an answer. For us today, there are times that the Lord will require of us an answer as well. It wasn’t in Job’s time, and it’s not today, that God doesn’t know the answer – the point is for us to formulate an answer and contemplate the consequence (or result) of the answer.

Conclusion: When we are faced with trials in life – even severe trials – how do we respond? That is really the underlying point to be made here. There is a right way to respond, and Job seemed to falter some in his response. The questions about to be asked were to get him to refocus on what is both real and important.