

“What Shall I Answer Thee?”

Job 40:1-41:34

Here before us is the continued reply of Jehovah. (Our text is found in verse 4.) He addresses Job specifically here, without regard to Elihu or Job’s three friends. We find in Job’s brief response to God that He completely understood what God was trying to get across to him, and he regards himself as he should in relation to the holiness and greatness of God – as vile. The accusation of Elihu and Job’s three friends had been from the beginning that Job was somehow responsible for the trial he was facing, that there was some unconfessed sin that he was being punished for. And, they responded to Job’s continued expressed innocence with the idea that Job was a hypocrite, or that he was being overly self-righteous. Although he was, at times, self-righteous and self-pitying, he was correct in saying he was innocent of any sin that brought this trial on directly – and Jehovah agreed. Now, Job, when confronted with God directly, face-to-face, he sees himself as he ought – a vile sinner.

God, in His response to Job here, shows again that He is far greater and far more holy than anyone – including Job. Job was not sinless in all of this, and that is pointed out here. We need to understand that although we may not be guilty of something so vile as to bring a tragedy like happened to Job on ourselves, we are still, nonetheless, sinners and deserving of hell itself, if not for the grace of God. We need to be so eternally grateful that we are the children of the Almighty, or else we would perish in that sin.

These two chapters at the end of Job's trial show us, once again, that we have nothing to compare to God. We have:

I. NO ANSWER TO GIVE – 40:1-5

A. When confronted with questions by God that addressed his self-righteousness, Job had no answer to give that would even come close to justifying some of his comments.

B. In verse 2, God asks Job (and his three friends, as well as Elihu), if he was going to instruct God, if he was going to reprove Him.

1. The words, "Shall he that contendeth" is all one word in the Hebrew – הִגִּיד (a Hebrew infinitive absolute). The word, in the sense that it is used here, is a legal term and was used often in ancient writings to mean to conduct a lawsuit or a court case – to present evidence either in defense of an allegation or for the prosecution of one.
2. Job is seen here as having presented his case to God from the prosecutorial side and would have been seen as not just defending his position but "instructing" God – the only time this word is used in the Old Testament and means to reprove or correct.
3. God tells Job if he was actually going to instruct God into how He acts or reacts to

others then he needed to tell God how to do it. Obviously, Job knew better.

4. Job was found throughout the book as asking God to show him why, to give a reason, or to he asked God to stop the trial, or to end his life – all of which would have been seen as an action of self-righteousness.

C. Verses 4-5 – once this was said by God, Job understood what he had done, and what he had said, and his response was, in essence, "I have no answer for that." It's not that he wasn't going to answer – for he said he had already answered, twice – but, once confronted with the holiness of God and his own sinful nature, he found himself to be vile and unworthy of answering.

1. The word "vile" (קָלִיל, קִלְתִּי) here means to be light (as opposed to heavy), to be slight, diminished – what Job thought were arguments of great weight and matter were now seen by him as "light" in comparison to God – as "vile" in nature, as if he had anything in any way that would add to God's greatness.
2. So, Job realizes his sin in trying to justify himself, and he stops – oh, that we would do the same when it comes to our sin!! Not what we think is sin, or what others consider sin to be, but what is actually sin in God's eyes – that which diminishes His holiness.

Psalm 51:4-5

⁴ Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.

⁵ Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.

Isaiah 6:5

⁵ Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.

Isaiah 53:6

⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

II. NO ACTION TO TAKE – 40:6-14

A. Once confronted with the truth that he had no answer to give, no response would be justified when confronted with holiness and greatness, Job also realized that he had no action to take to support his previous position – the greatness of God was far more than anything he could do.

B. God ask Job a series of questions in verses 8-9 that point out man's inability to act in comparison to God – these are all rhetorical questions – there is no answer needed to be given, for the answer is obvious.

1. "Wilt thou disannul my judgment?" – Are you, Job, going to make what I've chosen

in my absolute sovereignty, of none effect?

2. "Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?" – Are you, Job, going to try and make me look like the "bad guy" here just so you can look good?
3. "Hast thou an arm like God? – As described in the Bible, the arm of God is far more powerful than anything on earth, and Job is asked if his was like that.
4. "Canst thou thunder with a voice like him?" – Can you control the storms, and cause the thunder to sound?

C. In verses 9-14, God challenges Job with a series of things that only God can do – and Job is so fully aware of that that he just stands in awe of the actions the Almighty can take, in awe of the power He demonstrates.

D. If we realize this, as Job did, we will be far less proud and far more humble, which is the reaction God wants us to have to His power.

III. NO ABILITY TO MATCH – 40:15-41:34

A. In the remainder of chapter 40 God uses the animal called "behemoth" to show that the abilities of God are far beyond anything Job has, or anyone else has, for that matter.

1. No one is sure what animal is meant here – some say it is the elephant, some a

hippopotamus, some a water-ox, or water buffalo, some an alligator, some a dinosaur.

2. The word means a very large animal – and that’s all we know for sure about what type of animal it was.
3. It was created by God during the six days of creation – so it was a real animal, not just a mystical one to prove the ability of God.
4. It was large, had strong bones, powerful tail, ate large amounts of food, drank large amounts of water, etc., which is why many (including those at Answers in Genesis) believe this was a dinosaur.
5. The only mention of this creature in the Bible is here.

B. All of chapter 41 is given to the creature known as "leviathan" – we know more about this creature than "behemoth" since the Bible says more about it than "behemoth."

Psalm 74:14

¹⁴ Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces, and gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness.

Psalm 104:25–26

²⁵ So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts.

²⁶ There go the ships: there is that leviathan, whom thou hast made to play therein.

Isaiah 27:1

¹ In that day the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.

1. Although more is said about this creature, there is no sure way to know what creature it is speaking of.
2. The reason it is translated "leviathan" is because that is a literal translation of the Hebrew word (לִיָּתָן) and it wasn't given any further descriptive name because there was no way to know exactly what animal was meant.
3. It was a creature that Job would have known about, based upon the way the question was asked in verse one.
4. Quite a few translators and expositors consider it to be the crocodile native to the land at the time, but there are some descriptions given that don't fit that animal, so we can't be sure.
5. Some think it may have been a dinosaur that is now distinct – this may very well be the case. Some also consider it to be the dragon of antiquity and/or folklore.

C. No matter what these two creatures were, the point that Jehovah is making to Job is, do you have the ability to create and control these two very huge creatures? The answer was obvious – no one could – no one but their Creator.

Conclusion: When faced with the absolute holiness of God, and the absolute power of the Almighty, we, like Job, will consider ourselves as nothing. When we do, we can then be in a position to accept His Word as truth and be humbled to the position of being His servants – both of which is why this passage is here.