

The Book of Job

Out of the Whirlwind

Lesson #11 for December 10, 2016

Scriptures: Job 38-39; 40:1-4; 42:1-6; John 1:29; Matthew 16:13; 1 Corinthians 1:18-27; Luke 5:1-8.

1. What a surprise! Suddenly, God joined the conversation! For 35 chapters Job and his four friends had been talking about God and what God had done. Then, God Himself spoke up to them. Although we do not know exactly how God spoke or even whether He spoke only to Job or also to the others, God's words were very significant. Did they all hear God?
2. Remembering Job 1&2, is it surprising to see that God Himself spoke? Surely, this should be an indication to doubters that God takes an intimate, personal interest in every single human being—especially those who closely follow His will in their lives. Satan spoke through that spirit as recorded in Job 4. In most of Job 38-42, God Himself spoke.
3. Read Job 38:1; it says that God Himself spoke! Job had been waiting for that for a long time. See multiple passages in the book. Elihu did not want it ever to happen! (Job 37:20) Would the conversations have been different if God had spoken earlier? What do you think would have happened if God had allowed all four of Job's friends to respond to His speech?
4. We are told that God spoke out of the whirlwind. The word translated *whirlwind* can also be translated as *storm* or *tempest*. (See Isaiah 29:6; Zechariah 9:14; 2 Kings 2:1.) Was God speaking through the whirlwind? Or, was He using the whirlwind to hide His presence lest He frighten or destroy Job and his friends? Surely, we would have to agree that this theophany (a visible manifestation of God to humanity) was quite different from Elijah's experience recorded in 1 Kings 19:12. Why does God choose sometimes to speak out of the whirlwind and at other times in a "still, small voice"? Compare the experience of the children of Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai. (Exodus 20:18-20; Deuteronomy 5:23-33)
5. We know of a number of other instances recorded in the Bible in which God revealed Himself in various ways to fallen human beings. Think of Moses, Joshua, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Paul. Of course, the most important was the life and ministry of Jesus Christ Himself.
6. Read Genesis 15:1-6; 32:24-32; and John 1:29. Do these verses give us a clue about how close God can actually come to us? How close do you feel that God is to you? Do you wish He were closer? Or, would you like Him to stay further away? Would you like God to treat you as He treated Job? How do you really want Him to relate to you?
7. How would you like to have a personal interview with God, let us say, once a week? Or, once a month? But, who do you think would demand equal time? Would you like to have an interview with Satan? Don't we have the privilege of listening to God when we read the Bible? Do we take His written words as seriously as if He were speaking to us personally and audibly?
8. Read Job 38:1-2. How do you think Job felt after those first few words from God? Did Job feel like he was being shamed by God? Does it seem to you that God was not too happy with what Job had said?
9. Throughout the Bible, we find that God was asking questions. Good teachers ask questions. That is not to suggest that God asks questions because He does not know the answers! God asks questions from a rhetorical standpoint; He asks them in order to get us to think about the answers. We may learn something important about ourselves and about God as we think. So, what do you think? Are God's questions always rhetorical? Why? Or, why not? Consider some of the questions recorded in the Bible that God has asked human beings: Genesis 3:11; 4:9;

1 Kings 19:9; Acts 9:4; Matthew 16:13. How would you answer the question in Matthew 16:13 if it were asked of you today? How would you describe the world's current understanding of who Jesus was/is?

10. Read Job 8:1-2 (Bildad); 11:1-3 (Zophar); and 15:1-3 (Eliphaz). Do God's opening comments in Job 38:1-2 seem to reflect these thoughts from Job's friends? Why would God appear to agree with the words of the so-called friends?
11. If God should come to you right now and talk to you about your life and what you are doing for Him, what would you answer or say? What specific questions do you think He would ask you? Might He ask you why you are not doing a better job of witnessing? Or, do you really want Him to come back soon? Are you ready?
12. Read Job 38:4-41. What were God's essential questions in this section? Of course, He started out by asking Job where he was when God was creating the world. Then, He asked if Job could control nature in any way. Of course, those were not the immediate answers that Job was looking for! Why do you think God answered Job in this way? Was God being sarcastic?

The Lord then points to wonders and mysteries of Creation, again with a series of rhetorical questions that cover not just the foundations of the earth but also the mysteries of the weather and even of the stars themselves. " 'Can you bind the cluster of the Pleiades, or loose the belt of Orion?' " (*Job 38:31, NKJV*). He then points Job back to the earth, to everything from human insight (*Job 38:36*) to the lives of wild animals (*Job 38:39-41*)—a theme that is fleshed out in much more detail all through Job 39, as well. Had the book been written today, the Lord might have asked, "Who binds the quarks in protons and neutrons?" "Where were you when I first measured out a Planck mass?" "Is it by your wisdom that gravity bends space and time?"—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Tuesday, December 6.

13. We should note Job 38:7. Who was present for the creation of this world and the creation of Adam and Eve? Who was observing every single detail of that whole process? God asked Job about creation. And Job did not have the answers. So, if he did not know much about creation, how could he know about the Creator? Should this remind us of our position in the universe?
14. We recognize that Job who lived about 4000 years ago probably had relatively little information about many aspects of science and creation. Think of all that we have discovered and learned just in the last 500 years. Five hundred years ago, people believed that this earth was the center of the universe! Many believed that this earth was flat! Today, we live in a world in which many believe that everything must be proven by science before it should be believed. "Science is the belief in the ignorance of experts."—Richard Feynman.
15. How do you compare your trust in Scripture versus your beliefs in the findings of modern science? Consider the following words from Ellen White:

"The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever." Deuteronomy 29:29. Just how God accomplished the work of creation He has never revealed to men; human science cannot search out the secrets of the Most High. His creative power is as incomprehensible as His existence.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* 113.3; 3SG 93.1 (1864); 1SP 88.1.

16. Surely, in light of all this, we need to be very cautious in our boasts about our knowledge. See 1 Corinthians 3:19; 1:18-27. Think of all the amazing new discoveries that have been made

in the last 300 years—or even 30 years. In what ways does the created world cause you to marvel about the power of our God? Have you ever wondered how God could take a few strands of DNA and produce all living things—from viruses to human beings!

17. Read Job 40:1-5 and 42:1-6. How do you explain Job's responses in these verses? Was it true that Job had already said too much? What about his friends? Did Job ever question God's wisdom? When he was asking why all of that happened to him, was that questioning God's wisdom? Are you glad that God allowed all of that to happen to Job so that we could have the record? What are we able to learn from Job's story? By the time of his death, was Job happy about his relationship with God? Would you be willing to have a Job-like experience if it would help God in the great controversy? Will the 144,000 have Job-like experiences at the end of this world's history?
18. Job was humble enough to admit his ignorance. Do you think his friends were willing to admit their ignorance? Or, did they still think that they had represented God correctly?
19. Read Job 42:3 again. If Job was ignorant about God, what about his friends? What if God had given them a chance to respond? Was God able to speak to Job because Job had such a great relationship with God? If God had appeared to Job's friends, would His very presence have destroyed them? Or, do you think that when God appeared to Job, his friends heard too? Or, was it a private revelation or vision that only appeared to Job?
20. Read Job 42:5. How did Job develop that wonderful relationship with God if he had only heard about God? Did he learn everything he knew from others? Did he learn it from angels? Would you say that Job's knowledge of God was sufficient to get him through the experience he had? When God spoke, was Job happy that God was speaking to him again? Or, by that time, was he afraid of God, just as Elihu was afraid?
21. Read Isaiah 6:1-8 and Luke 5:1-8. Are these passages somehow parallel to the experience of Job? Shouldn't we always be in awe when God speaks? Especially to us in our sinful state? When we read the Bible and realize that God is speaking to us through His Word, are we still in awe? Why? Or, why not?
22. Review Job 1:1 and 38:1 again. Despite everything that Satan did, he failed to break Job's trust in God. Considering what we now know about Job alongside what we have just read about Isaiah and Peter, does a view of God make us more aware of our sinfulness? Or, more aware of the awesomeness of God? Or, both? How do you think Job felt as he heard those words? Did he abhor himself? Did he feel his own sinfulness and smallness? Of course, we must recognize that we can never save ourselves; we could never do enough good works to merit any favor from God. We recognize that we need Someone to do for us what we could never do for ourselves. Of course, that Someone is Jesus Christ.
23. So, in light of all that, would you say that God is looking for trembling servants? Or, understanding friends? Try to imagine yourself right now in God's immediate presence. How would you react? As recorded in Scripture, many of those to whom God had appeared fell down on their faces in the dirt. (Ezekiel 1:28; Daniel 10:9) What do you think God actually wants? Notice that in every case where people fell on their faces, God raised them up so He could speak to them. Does that suggest that God wants trembling servants? Or, understanding friends? Could we be God's friends and still be in awe of Him? As we get to know God better, shouldn't that cause us even more awe?

The greatest minds, if not guided by the word of God in their research, become bewildered in their attempts to trace the relations of science and revelation. Because the Creator and His works are so far beyond their comprehension that they are unable to explain them by natural laws, they regard Bible history as unreliable. Those who doubt the reliability of the records of the Old and New

Testaments, will be led to go a step further, and doubt the existence of God; and then, having lost their anchor, they are left to beat about upon the rocks of infidelity.—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, March 13, 1884, par. 3; *Patriarchs and Prophets* 113.4 (1890); *CE* 193.2; *LHU* 60.3; *3SM* 307.1; compare *DD* 8.3; *FE* 329.1; *GC* 522.3; *Mar* 135.2; *YI*, January 31, 1895, par. 3.

24. As you read Ellen White’s statement, think about what is going on in the world around us. What teachings and ideas—even paradigms—have grown up in absolute contrast with the Word of God? Think of atheism, agnosticism, the Big Bang theory, evolution, and many doubts about the reliability of Scripture.

“I have lived three distinct lives in this single span,” said Whitehead; “one from childhood to the first world war; one from 1914 to my residence in America in 1924; and a third here since 1924. The first seems the most fantastic; in those years from the 1880’s to the first war, who ever *dreamed* that the ideas and institutions which then looked so stable would be impermanent?”

“Although I was a little boy when you were already a man grown, that world of the 1890’s seems to swim in a golden haze of mythological idyl.

“Fifty-seven years ago it was,” said he, “when I was a young man in the University of Cambridge. I was taught science and mathematics by brilliant men and I did well in them; since the turn of the century I have lived to see every one of the basic assumptions of both set aside; not, indeed, discarded, but of use as qualifying clauses, instead of as major propositions; and all of this in one life-span—the most fundamental assumptions of supposedly exact sciences set aside. And yet, in the face of that, the discoverers of the new hypotheses in science are declaring, ‘*Now at last, we have certitude*—when some of the assumptions that we have seen upset had endured for more than twenty centuries.’”—A. N. Whitehead, *Dialogues of Alfred North Whitehead* 128. [Italic type is in the original.]

25. When I entered medical school many years ago, the dean of the school of medicine stood up and told us that at least half of what they would teach us was wrong; but, they did not know which half! Is that still true about the knowledge we have in virtually all areas of science and human existence? Think about some of the marvelous things that science has discovered that should give us even more awe of the God who created all of that.
26. Think about all we have learned since the invention of the microscope and the telescope. Remember that Darwin thought that the insides of cells were just a kind of clear soup!
27. Think of some of the things that we should learn from this lesson. Do we understand how God’s long list of seemingly unrelated questions might have begun to answer Job’s question? Was it that God was telling Job that he could not at that point understand the great controversy? Did God expect Job to develop some utter self-aborrence after listening to God’s questions? Or, was it that Job was not wrong; he just wished that he had been able to represent God better?
28. Would it be correct to say that the most important thing that we can do in this life is to begin to get to know God better? But, like Job we need to realize that our knowledge will only be a tiny beginning. We will be learning about God for the rest of eternity.
29. Having reviewed the questions that God raised in Job 38-41, do you see an immediate answer to the causes for Job’s suffering? Could it be that without an understanding of the great controversy, it is impossible to understand why all of that happened? Was it important

for Job to understand that even though he regarded God as a Friend, he still had a lot to learn?

30. Is a belief in the literal seven-day creation of our world important for Seventh-day Adventists? Do we need to realize that every question will have its ultimate answer in God? God is our Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer, and Friend. (Compare Isaiah 40-55.)
31. Was there really a reason for Job to repent in dust and ashes? Wasn't Job the one that God said as recorded in Job 42:7-8 had spoken the truth about God? While we need to approach God with appropriate humility, God never asks us to have self-abhorrence! Aren't we the children of God, the brothers and sisters of Christ? But, we do need to abhor our sinfulness and our lack of knowledge and understanding of God. Like Job, shouldn't we all wish we could do better? Did Job's repentance lead him to an even better understanding of God? Was Job shocked when God spoke the words in Job 42:7-8?
32. How do all of God's questions impact you? Does it lead you to want to know more about God? How many of our ideas about God are wrong? Shouldn't we be forever eager to learn more about God and ready at any moment to give up any ideas that prove to be wrong about Him?
33. Think back through what you know of Job's statements, the statements of his three friends, and the statements of Elihu. Would it be correct to say that when it was all said and done, they were all wrong? Were they all surprised at God's speech? Shouldn't we each be delighted every time we learn something new and surprising about God? We listened to Elihu's speech for 6 chapters. He came to a conclusion in Job 37:20 (*GNB*) by saying: "I wouldn't ask to speak with God; why should I give him a chance to destroy me?" And then, God suddenly appeared and spoke! Elihu's speech was promised to be different and new but turned out to be very disappointing—just a rehash of what had already been said. By contrast, God's speech was startlingly different; but, it did not seem to answer the questions that had been debated for so long. However, it does cause us to think outside the box. He is a Creator-God who is intimately involved in every detail from the smallest miracle to the greatest universe-wide event taking place at any moment. How does it make you feel to realize that you live in the presence of such a God?
34. Sometimes, Sabbath school lessons turn out to be nothing more than a kind of second sermon. Shouldn't Sabbath school teachers be listened to more for their questions than for their answers? The more participation there is in a Sabbath School class, the better!
35. If you had been asked to be the speech-writer for God at the end of the discussions in Job, what would you have said? Shouldn't we be happy with what God did say as recorded in Job 42:7-8? Shouldn't that lead us to read and reread the entire book of Job to discover as much as we can about God? And we need to do that in light of our greater understanding of the entire great controversy.
36. Unfortunately, many of our images of God are heavily influenced by what others have said to us. How can we get the clearest picture of God possible? By reading Scripture and the writings of Ellen White, are we letting God speak for Himself?
37. It is interesting to read Job 37:1-13 to see Elihu's comments about God speaking out of the storm. And then, contrast that with God actually speaking out of the storm!
38. Was God being impolite when He spoke only to Job during His speech? As we have questioned earlier, were the others still present? Did they hear God's words? Or, like the companions of Paul on the road to Damascus, did they only hear the sound but did not understand the words? (See Acts 9:7; 22:9.)
39. In conclusion, imagine the notion that the God of the universe, with all the responsibilities He has, is taking personal interest in and care for each one of us. How does that make you feel?

40. Does God's revelation of Himself as recorded in Job 38-41 give you a clearer insight into your relationship with God? Think of the things that God focused on just in Job 38: The primordial events (Job 38:4-7)—but do not forget to notice who was also there; the control God has over heaven and earth and even the sea (Job 38:8-11); and how the daily cycle plays out (Job 38:12-15) even to the realms of the dead (Job 38:17) and to the very elements (Job 38:18-21) and the heavens (Job 38:31-30); and, then, in Job 39 He talked about the animal kingdom and how He helps each of them.
41. God ended up His first speech by asking the question: "Is there anybody who can instruct *Shaddai*?" *Shaddai* is a Hebrew word emphasizing God's supreme sovereignty. Were there any of the participants in the book of Job who questioned God's sovereignty? Why was God bringing it up? Job repeatedly admitted either by his silence or his acknowledgment that he did not know the answers to why God was doing what He was doing or the reasons for the questions He asked. In light of all the scientific knowledge that is available today, how would you answer God's questions?
42. Without knowing the situation that we know from Job 1&2, would it be possible to understand the reason(s) for the story of Job? The only possibility would be that this world is not orderly at all, but just a collection of chaotic events!
43. Those who are aware of what is going on in the scientific world and in the public arena are aware that many of the people in science deny the existence of God and certainly His creative power. But, some scientists are becoming more and more convinced of some kind of an intelligent design also known as ID. There seem to be complex things in creation that cannot be explained without intelligent design. Darwin himself said: "If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed, which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down."—Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species* (1859, Murray: London.) Chapter 6 (page 189).
44. While many scientists recognize the challenge of trying to explain the development of complex organs, many of them still consider the idea of intelligent design to be pseudoscientific. Many of them look not to a Creator-God but rather to some other explanations such as pantheism, theosophy, even New Age ideas, or some other source.
45. So, why is it important for us as Seventh-day Adventists to believe in a recent creation? Is it because we believe in a Creator-God who will one day come back and take us to live with Him forever?
46. Read Job 40:3-4 and 42:1-6. What is implied by Job's repentance? What did Job learn from that whole experience?

The closer you come to Jesus, the more faulty you will appear in your own eyes; for your vision will be clearer, and your imperfections will be seen in broad and distinct contrast to His perfect nature. This is evidence that Satan's delusions have lost their [65] power; that the vivifying influence of the Spirit of God is arousing you.—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* 64.2.

47. In his repentance, did Job recognize that he still had a lot to learn? Do you still have a lot of questions about God? Good! You have the rest of eternity to ask them and get answers! But, hasn't God already given us many of the answers through His revelation in Scripture and the writings of Ellen White? By asking all those questions, was God encouraging Job to listen and be patient? What have we learned from the book of Job so far and from God's speech?

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