***Job: A Study in Suffering…And Faith***

**Answers to Study Questions**

Lesson Twelve: God’s First Challenge to Job and Job’s Answer

Text: Job 38:1-40:5

Lesson Objectives:

1. Be able to describe the character and purpose of God’s speech.

2. Recognize the effect on Job of God’s speech.

1. **In what two broad areas did God question Job’s knowledge and power?**

He questioned Job’s knowledge and power concerning both inanimate (38:1-38) and animate nature (38:39-39:30). The questions “Do you know…” and “Can you…” were used by God to challenge Job in these areas.

There appears to be some sarcasm in the Lord’s words to Job in the first section:

**Job 38:4–5 (ESV)**

**4** “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. **5** Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it?

**Job 38:18–21 (ESV)**

**18** Have you comprehended the expanse of the earth? Declare, if you know all this. **19** “Where is the way to the dwelling of light, and where is the place of darkness, **20** that you may take it to its territory and that you may discern the paths to its home? **21** You know, for you were born then, and the number of your days is great!

1. **Contrast Job’s confrontation with God with that “debate” that Job had desired.**

Job spoke of defending Himself before God (9:14-15; 13:3, 15-24; 23:3-7; 31:35-37) and demanding an answer/explana­tion of God (10:2-7).

**Job 9:14–15 (ESV)** [larger context: vv. 13-24]

**14** How then can I answer him, choosing my words with him? **15** Though I am in the right, I cannot answer him; I must appeal for mercy to my accuser.

**Job 13:3 (ESV)**

**3** But I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to argue my case with God.

**Job 13:15–24 (ESV)**

**15** Though he slay me, I will hope in him; yet I will argue my ways to his face. **16** This will be my salvation, that the godless shall not come before him. **17** Keep listening to my words, and let my declaration be in your ears. **18** Behold, I have prepared my case; I know that I shall be in the right. **19** Who is there who will contend with me? For then I would be silent and die. **20** Only grant me two things, then I will not hide myself from your face: **21** withdraw your hand far from me, and let not dread of you terrify me. **22** Then call, and I will answer; or let me speak, and you reply to me. **23** How many are my iniquities and my sins? Make me know my transgression and my sin. **24** Why do you hide your face and count me as your enemy?

**Job 23:3–7 (ESV)**

**3** Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat! **4** I would lay my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments. **5** I would know what he would answer me and understand what he would say to me. **6** Would he contend with me in the greatness of his power? No; he would pay attention to me. **7** There an upright man could argue with him, and I would be acquitted forever by my judge.

**Job 31:35–37 (ESV)**

**35** Oh, that I had one to hear me! (Here is my signature! Let the Almighty answer me!) Oh, that I had the indictment written by my adversary! **36** Surely I would carry it on my shoulder; I would bind it on me as a crown; **37** I would give him an account of all my steps; like a prince I would approach him.

**Job 31:35–37 (NIV)**

**35** (“Oh, that I had someone to hear me! I sign now my defense—let the Almighty answer me; let my accuser put his indictment in writing. **36** Surely I would wear it on my shoulder, I would put it on like a crown. **37** I would give him an account of my every step; I would present it to him as to a ruler.)—

**Job 10:1–7 (ESV)**

**1** “I loathe my life; I will give free utterance to my complaint; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. **2** I will say to God, Do not condemn me; let me know why you contend against me. **3** Does it seem good to you to oppress, to despise the work of your hands and favor the designs of the wicked? **4** Have you eyes of flesh? Do you see as man sees? **5** Are your days as the days of man, or your years as a man’s years, **6** that you seek out my iniquity and search for my sin, **7** although you know that I am not guilty, and there is none to deliver out of your hand?

However, instead of placing God on the witness stand for the purpose of cross-examination or causing God to listen to his defense, Job was himself called to answer – and not concerning his righteousness, but concerning his understanding of God’s actions in the natural world and his power to do what God did.

**Job 40:1–2 (ESV)**

**1** And the Lord said to Job: **2** “Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty? He who argues with God, let him answer it.”

**Job 40:1–2 (NKJV)**

**1** Moreover the Lord answered Job, and said: **2** “Shall the one who contends with the Almighty correct *Him?* He who rebukes God, let him answer it.”

1. **What are Pleiades and Orion? What point did God make by His mention of them?**

Pleiades and Orion are star constellations. God made the point that Job was unable to rule or change the position of the heavenly bodies (38:31-33).

**Job 38:31–33 (ESV)**

**31** “Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades or loose the cords of Orion? **32** Can you lead forth the Mazzaroth in their season, or can you guide the Bear with its children? **33** Do you know the ordinances of the heavens? Can you establish their rule on the earth?

In Job’s first response to Bildad, he acknowledged that God had created these constellations. Coincidence that God mentioned them in His questions to Job?

**Job 9:5–10 (ESV)**

**5** he who removes mountains, and they know it not, when he overturns them in his anger, **6** who shakes the earth out of its place, and its pillars tremble; **7** who commands the sun, and it does not rise; who seals up the stars; **8** who alone stretched out the heavens and trampled the waves of the sea; **9** who made the Bear and Orion, the Pleiades and the chambers of the south; **10** who does great things beyond searching out, and marvelous things beyond number.

1. **What did God ask Job about the wild goats and deer?**

**Job 39:1–4 (ESV)**

**1** “Do you know when the mountain goats give birth? Do you observe the calving of the does? **2** Can you number the months that they fulfill, and do you know the time when they give birth, **3** when they crouch, bring forth their offspring, and are delivered of their young? **4** Their young ones become strong; they grow up in the open; they go out and do not return to them.

He asked Job if he was familiar with their birthing habits (e.g. gestation period). Since these animals seek concealed places to give birth, it appears that God’s question was designed to show Job that he was not privy to “secret things,” not omniscient as God is.

1. **Note several wonders of nature and the animal kingdom that God used to make His point with Job.**

Wonders of inanimate nature:

The control of the sea (38:8-11)

Dawn/light (38:12-15; 19-21)

The springs of the sea (38:16)

Snow, hail, rain and lightning (38:22-35)

The diffusion of light (rainbow?) (38:24)

Thunder (38:25)

It should be noted that these things were spoken of in a figurative way. There is no literal “storehouse” of snow and hail (e.g., v. 22).

Wonders of animate nature:

The lion’s hunter instinct (38:39-40)

The swiftness nature of the wild donkey and strength of the wild ox (39:5-12)

The speed of the ostrich (39:13-18 – but poor parent!)

The courage of the horse (39:19-25; esp. v. 22)

The migration of the hawk (39:26)

The eyesight of the eagle (39:27-30)

1. **Did God deal with the question of innocent suffering at all in this speech? Why not?**

No! (as the question implies!). God simply let Job know that he (Job) was very puny and ignorant when compared to Him.

Why didn’t God answer Job’s question about suffering? Was it entirely about the fact that Job might not understand God’s working on the moral plain? Was there a great purpose?

Job’s response may help to understand God’s purpose:

**Job 40:3–5 (ESV)**

**3** Then Job answered the Lord and said: **4** “Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer you? I lay my hand on my mouth. **5** I have spoken once, and I will not answer; twice, but I will proceed no further.”

**Job 40:3–5 (NKJV)**

**3** Then Job answered the Lord and said: **4** “Behold, I am vile; What shall I answer You? I lay my hand over my mouth. **5** Once I have spoken, but I will not answer; Yes, twice, but I will proceed no further.”

**Job 40:3–5 (NASB95)**

**3** Then Job answered the Lord and said, **4** “Behold, I am insignificant; what can I reply to You? I lay my hand on my mouth. **5** “Once I have spoken, and I will not answer; Even twice, and I will add nothing more.”

**Job 40:3–5 (NLT)**

**3** Then Job replied to the Lord, **4** “I am nothing—how could I ever find the answers? I will cover my mouth with my hand. **5** I have said too much already. I have nothing more to say.”