

Keynotes from Tim Gamston's am Sermon on 22/5/2022

Series: "Seeing God through Suffering" Pt 9

"Silenced by the God of the universe"

Text: Job 38 verses 1-15

Scripture references from the ESV

Job 38:1-15 Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said:² "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?³ Dress for action^[a] like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me.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? ⁶ On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone,⁷ when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy? ⁸ "Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb, ⁹ when I made clouds its garment and thick darkness its swaddling band, ¹⁰ and prescribed limits for it and set bars and doors,¹¹ and said, 'Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stayed'? ¹² "Have you commanded the morning since your days began, and caused the dawn to know its place,¹³ that it might take hold of the skirts of the earth, and the wicked be shaken out of it?¹⁴ It is changed like clay under the seal, and its features stand out like a garment.¹⁵ From the wicked their light is withheld, and their uplifted arm is broken.

The Bible tells us that God is present everywhere so we can be sure that, wherever we are, he hears us and knows every thought and question in our minds. You could ask God anything you like about your own suffering, or the suffering and evil in the world and know with certainty that he hears your questions.

How do you think God would answer?

We have sat with Job as he has asked his questions, and lamented the day of his birth, and have heard his friends lay the blame for his suffering on hidden sin. Job has protested his blamelessness and we have heard that:

- He accuses God of being unjust and uncaring
- He longs to have his day in court so he can put his case to God, and have God agree that his suffering is unfair – in essence asking 'why, Lord'?

Elihu, God's man on the ground has spoken God's words into Job's suffering. Now God speaks directly (v1 above). Job had longed for this, though he was terrified at the idea in case God proved him wrong.

- Do we believe that we have a God who speaks into our lives, or do we think that will not happen?

Job thought it would never happen. Yet God has heard every word that has been spoken and now

God speaks and makes his presence known to Job

God starts with a rebuke (v2 above). Job has said many words but has spoken without understanding. He has spoken from knowledge based on his limited understanding of the world and of himself. He knows nothing of:

- How God runs the universe
- The place of evil in creation
- The purposes of God in suffering

God is going to give Job something much better than an answer to his question – why, Lord?

Job wanted to cross-examine God but instead God cross-examines Job and enables him see what was beyond his vision before.

The questions God asks are designed by him to show Job, and us, just who God is, giving us two truths that many of us know just as head knowledge. Often, we know things **about** God, but this is not what changes the way we live or how we respond to circumstances. We need to respond in the right way to these two truths about who God is.

1. **God creates the universe (vv4-7 above).** Job sees the world as disordered and chaotic, a place where injustice rules. He cannot see any beauty in it that is worthy of joy. God shows himself to be:
 - The architect who designed this earth
 - The surveyor who laid out the measurements
 - The builder who actually built it

God wants us to understand that despite what we might see as disorder, chaos and injustice, there is in fact order and purpose because God is a God of order and purpose. God has designed, laid out and created a world that is ordered. That is why the laws of physics don't change. There is also moral, social and relational order. It is a world with justice at its heart, a world with so much beauty in it that the angels sang for joy (v7 above). As each day unfolded, the angels saw the beauty of creation and rejoiced in the God who was creating it.

In contrast, Job's suffering has caused him to curve in on himself. He has lost sight of the beauty of God's world and can see only evil and disorder. If he had been present when God created the world, he would have known that:

- This world is ordered because God is a God of order
- This world is filled with beauty because God is a God of beauty

We may know in our head that God created this world and created it as 'good' but in our suffering, it is easy for us to curve in on ourselves so that we miss the beauty. We only see the evil and disorder and fail to notice that the world is still a place of beauty and order. There is still the problem of good, evil and suffering in God's world but even though there are thorns and thistles as a result of the curse there is

beauty that leads us to see the beauty of the God who created it.

That beauty exists in people too but we can be so critical of others and ourselves, grieving over the sin that we see and do, that we fail to notice that there is something of the image of God to be seen in every human being. Without God's account of how he created the world, we would either be overwhelmed by the evil we see and the suffering we experience or we would begin to worship creation rather than the Creator. We were made for more than that!

We were made to have our hearts satisfied with God and God alone.

Creation is only a signpost to God and we do not have the knowledge to understand its full beauty and order. God speaks into the evil and disorder that affect us to reveal himself as creator so that we see in him perfect beauty and order. Our eyes are lifted to him and we begin to trust that

this God of beauty and order can bring beauty and order to our chaos and suffering.

2. God governs the universe. God did not just set the world in motion and leave it to run. People accuse God of being unjust and uncaring (as Job did), and of being unwise and impotent. We can see four aspects of God's governance that disprove that theory as God addresses those accusations in his questioning of Job.

a) God governs the universe with perfect wisdom (vv3-4 above).

- Does Job have sufficient wisdom to challenge God's governance of the universe and also of Job's life?

Job is no match for God, and at the end Job is silenced (**40:4** see p4). He has to concede that God is all-wise and therefore governs the universe and Job's life with perfect wisdom. In the presence of this great God, we too must fall silent, and acknowledge that **God governs this universe and our lives with perfect wisdom.**

b) God governs this universe with perfect justice. (vv12-15 above).

- Does Job's complaint that God is unjust (and our cry of 'it's not fair') hold water?

God has control over when the sun rises, and he adds a moral dimension to his questioning here (**v15** above). Most crimes are committed at night, under cover of darkness. By commanding the dawn to come at a certain time, God is saying to Job that he has set limits on when the wicked can work because he is a just God.

There is a dawn to come that will be brought in not by the rising sun, but by the return of Jesus Christ to this earth in such blazing glory that every evil deed will be exposed. On that day, he will justly judge every sinful deed, and every evildoer will be put in a place where they will never be able to work their evil again (**v13** above). Only those who have taken Jesus to be their Saviour now will be standing on that day, because **God is a just God.**

c) God governs the universe with perfect care. (vv34ff see p4).

- Are those who say God doesn't care about his creation right to think this?

God commands the clouds and directs them to drop their rain where it will do the most good for his creation (**vv25-27** see p4). We don't give a second thought to the

uninhabited places of the earth, but God nourishes life even where there is no human to see it or enjoy it. We see too how he cares for the animals (v39 ff see p4). When we doubt God's care, we need to look at creation and see how God cares. **The same God cares for us with perfect care.**

d) **God governs this universe with perfect power.**

- Is God impotent to deal with evil and suffering? Later in this series, we will look at Behemoth and Leviathan and see how God alone possesses the power to tame them. No human can do it.

What answer does God give to Job's question? God doesn't give an answer, though he could have told Job about his conversation with Satan (1: 8-12 see p4) or could have explained that Job's suffering was because he wanted to prove to Satan that a man would continue to love and fear God just for who God is. He doesn't answer or explain.

God is showing Job that he is under no obligation to give an account of his actions. He is the God who created us, and we are not our own. God is free to tell his story through the life of whosoever he wishes.

Instead of an answer, God gives Job something much better. God gives Job himself. God comes to Job in a display of his glory, which transforms Job (42:5 see p4). Nothing has changed externally for Job, but everything has changed in his heart. **God has come and Job has seen God.**

Now Job has God and he knows he can trust this wise, caring, just and powerful God in his suffering.

When the truths we know about God in our head move into our heart, and we apply them to our own suffering, then **God becomes real** to us in a way he would not have done otherwise. He does not have to answer our why questions but he does something much better.

God gives us himself.

We see that, above all, when the transcendent God, who fills us with awe and wonder, drew near to us in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, revealing God to us. Jesus came into our fallen, suffering world, taking on human flesh, and experienced

suffering himself. **God has truly entered in to our suffering.** We have messed up this world through our sin, but he came to put right the wrong we have done.

- God entered into our world in order to deal with our sin and to be punished in our place. His righteousness is given to us so that we can come into the presence of, and enjoy, this God of awe, mercy and majesty.
- We need to take hold of these truths and pray them into our hearts, using scripture, so that they do not just sit in our minds intellectually.

It would be tragic if these truths about God and his giving of himself did not change your life, causing you to lay down your rebellion against him and embrace Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour. There will still be suffering and troubles to endure, but your Saviour will be walking with you through them.

Meeting with this awesome God must change your life

40:4 "Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer you? I lay my hand on my mouth.

38:34 – 38 Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, that a flood of waters may cover you? ³⁵ Can you send forth lightnings, that they may go and say to you, 'Here we are'? ³⁶ Who has put wisdom in the inward parts^[c] or given understanding to the mind? ³⁷ Who can number the clouds by wisdom? Or who can tilt the waterskins of the heavens,³⁸ when the dust runs into a mass and the clods stick fast together?

38: 25-27 "Who has cleft a channel for the torrents of rain and a way for the thunderbolt,²⁶ to bring rain on a land where no man is, on the desert in which there is no man,²⁷ to satisfy the waste and desolate land, and to make the ground sprout with grass?

38:39- 39: 4 Can you hunt the prey for the lion, or satisfy the appetite of the young lions ⁴⁰ when they crouch in their dens or lie in wait in their thicket?⁴¹ Who provides for the raven its prey, when its young ones cry to God for help, and wander about for lack of food? 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 fulfil, 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.

1:8-12 And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?" ⁹ Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for no reason? ¹⁰ Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. ¹¹ But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face." ¹² And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand."

42:5 I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you;

The following questions, based on this sermon, are to help you to experience God in your life and especially in your suffering:

- 1) **Look at Job 38:8-11.** In these verses, God questions Job over who sets the boundaries for the sea. By implication it is God. God is the one who has set the boundary of the shoreline, and determines how far tsunamis travel inland. In the Bible, the sea is often a metaphor for the evil that we face.
 - **With that in mind, what does that say about how God relates to the evil that we face?**

- 2) **Read Psalm 69:1-3.** The Psalmist speaks about the waters, the troubles that are going to overwhelm him.
 - **What are some of the waters (the troubles) that currently threaten to overwhelm you?**

- 3) **How does Job 38:8-11 help you as you consider these waters of trouble?**

- 4) The Psalmist (**Ps 69**) cries out to God for help.
 - **How might you pray Job 38:8-11 as you face these troubles?**

