

God's Speech – Part 6

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – God answers Job and his friends by exalting his sovereign greatness over all things
2. aim – To cause us to see the sovereignty of God over every aspect of our lives
3. passage – Job 38:1-41:34

b. outline

1. God's Sovereignty Over Creation (Job 38:1-39:30)
2. Job's Response to God's Questions (Job 40:1-5)
3. God's Sovereignty Over Man (Job 40:6-41:34)

c. opening

1. the **structure** of the speech of God (**in two halves**)
 - a. in **chaps. 38-39**, God **asked Job** a series of *rhetorical questions* about what he has created, and whether Job was involved in the design of each element (the sovereignty of God **over creation**)
 - b. in **chap. 40:1-5 (an interlude)**, God **demands Job** answer for calling God a "faultfinder"
 1. **the ultimate question**: "will you even put me in the wrong?" and "will you condemn me that you may be in the right?" (**v. 8; emphasis mine**)
 2. Job had (in fact!) accused God (**by implication!**) of being "unfair" and/or "in the wrong"
 - a. **IOW**: Job struggles with the "why" of his circumstances; this causes him to "waver" back-and-forth between God being *good (when all is well)* and God being *unfair (when it is not)*
 3. **reality**: the *natural tendency* of fallen human beings to "lower" God and "elevate" ourselves
 - a. to "lower" the *nature* of God to our level by either 1) *blaming* him for the evil that befalls us, or 2) asserting that he cannot *decree* suffering to be a part of our existence
 - b. **in fact**: God *decrees* for suffering to be a part of our existence, and he *uses* suffering to *bring about* his good purposes – **to deny him that right is to "put [him] in the wrong"**
 - c. **i.e.** to attribute to God what is "wrong" **from our own opinions** about what constitutes "right" is to impugn his character – **to question God himself is the problem**
 - c. in **chaps 40-41**, God **rebukes Job** for elevating himself to the position of "god", asking *another* series of *rhetorical questions* regarding his power and position (the sovereignty of God **over man**)
 1. **ITC**: God seeks answers from Job about **who Job thinks he is ...**
 2. **strangely**: God will do this by *comparing* Job to two (2) members of the *animal kingdom* ... **the point being**: to demonstrate that Job has **no right to think like God**, in the face of beings supposedly "under" his dominion, yet outside of his control – the only sovereign God, not man

III. God's Sovereignty Over Man (Job 40:6-41:34)

Content

b. God calls Job to consider his sovereignty

1. **read 40:10-14**: the *key consideration* for Job: do you possess the power to "save" yourself, from "whatever" it is you believe you need to be saved (**e.g.** physical suffering, character reproach, etc.)
 - a. **note**: God grants Job something (**v. 14a**): "I will also acknowledge to you that ..."
 - b. **i.e.** I am willing to grant that "your own right hand can save you" (**v. 14b**; from "whatever"), **if** ...
 1. if (**v. 10**), you can "adorn yourself with majesty and dignity" and "clothe yourself with glory and splendor" (**i.e.** as a god), and ...
 2. if (**vv. 11-13**), you can "abase" or "bring ... low" or "tread down" all who are "proud" or "wicked" (**i.e.** bring judgment and punishment upon all who are "above" you [as you see it])
 3. then (**v. 14**), (if you can do these things) I will acknowledge your power and see you as you see yourself – I will grant that you are sovereign, and will bow to your power and purpose
 4. **IOW**: your assertion is that you are the sovereign one, that you get to decide how things go in the world (**i.e.** in your own life, and in the lives of others), so ...
 - c. **God says**: okay ... **I'll play along** ... let's "assume" (for a moment) that you really are the sovereign king over matters of life, morality, judgment, goodness, physical health, etc.
 1. **observation**: it is this "assertion" that separates genuine Christianity from false Christianity (and every other "religion) – any philosophical system that "pits" man's power against the

- Creator, or “limits” the Creator’s power, or “banishes” the Creator entirely, fails to recognize what is clear and obvious from within normal human experience
2. namely, we are *not* “gods” – we are utterly at the mercy of forces beyond us – such *false* systems assert that *we do have control* over many matters, *which we obviously don’t*
 3. **i.e.** genuine Christianity deals with *reality*; all others attempt to “develop” dogmas that give fallen humans the “illusion” of sovereignty (even if over a “small” area)
 - d. **God now says:** okay, let’s do a *reality check* on this whole matter of you being “god” ...
 1. so ... he turns to **two creatures** to do this reality check ...
2. the two creatures introduced
 - a. **read 40:15-19, 41:1-5:** Behemoth and Leviathan, a land giant and a giant of the sea
 1. **Behemoth** (*behemot*) = a large land herbivore; from the root for big animals, beasts, or cattle
 - a. suggestions include an elephant [**Calvin**], a hippopotamus, or another type of grass-eating creature (**note v. 15b**) – a *hapax legomenon*, thus difficult to ascertain precisely
 - b. **interestingly:** some commentators have suggested a *dinosaur* here, given that “terrible lizards” would not be far removed from Job (**i.e.** going extinct shortly after the Flood)
 2. **Leviathan** (*liwyatan*) = a large sea creature (**Psalm 104:25f**); from the root for a *wreath* or *garland* (**i.e. Prov. 1:9, 4:9**), implying a sea creature that “wraps itself around” its prey
 - a. suggestions include a whale [**Calvin; see Jonah**], a giant squid (kraken), a massive fish, a sea-going dragon, or simply a crocodile or alligator
 - b. **interestingly:** Leviathan is a name used (by allusion) for *Satan* in **Isaiah 27:1** (**cf. Job 3:8**)
 - c. **e.g.** in ancient Ugaritic myths, Leviathan described a powerful, dragon-like deity; an ancient symbol of *monstrous* horror – in **Isaiah 27**, God is pictured *destroying* such a “*fleeing ... twisting serpent*”, the “*dragon in the sea*” (**i.e.** a metaphor for Satan’s power over Israel)
 3. **IMO:** although God *certainly* could be pointing to real creatures that existed in the days of Job *and still do* (or to creatures that have since gone extinct) it seems to *me* that God is referring to two (2) *mythical* creatures known to Job as **symbols of evil**
 - a. **reason #1:** our post-Enlightenment worldview makes us “need” to know what these creatures really are/were – what if God *purposed* for us *not to know what they were*?
 - b. **reason #2:** the *use* of large beasts (one on land and one in the sea) seems far more *metaphorical* to me than actual animals – since Job is being asked if he can *subdue* either of them, it seems reasonable that God is using examples *far beyond human power*
 - c. **reason #3:** the connection of Leviathan to Satan *by name*, and the place of Satan in this book (**i.e.** as the *tormentor* of Job) seems far too *coincidental* (**i.e.** an evil spiritual force that cannot be tamed by men)
 - d. **reason #4:** the use of *mythical* creatures suggests beings *formed in the imaginations of men* (**a dragon**) – in contrast to all that God had created (**i.e.** as real; **see chap. 39**), these are creatures formed *in human myth*, which cannot be tamed nor controlled
 - e. **reason #5:** the fundamental question being raised: can you judge *the proud* (**see above**) – can you control *the primal forces of evil in the world that center around pride*?
 1. like Satan – the very *heart* of his sinfulness is *pride*, which he “implanted” as the *primal sin* of humans by tricking them to see themselves “like God”
 2. **IOW:** these creatures are *examples* (not realities) of things beyond the control of *man*
 3. **no man can truly conquer pride**, nor can he judge it in *others being guilty of it himself*
 3. the two creatures described
 - a. **note:** it is not *necessary* to comment on all God says about these creatures *to get the point*
 1. since, I have already read most of the description of Behemoth ...
 2. let’s read just a few verses more re: Leviathan ...
 - b. **read 41:8-9, 12-15, 33-34:** two creatures so *immense* that they are beyond the control of men
 1. the picture God paints of *both* is the utter disdain they have for puny humans
 - a. both are pictured as brutes of great strength, that no one can capture (**e.g. 40:24; 41:2; 41:13; 41:29**) – their strength is *beyond* the power of any man (or men)
 - b. **i.e.** God goes into *great detail* regarding the various physical abilities of these creatures (**i.e.** muscular, powerful, unafraid of man or beast, unrestrained even by *human morality*)
 - c. **i.e.** *examples* of that which is *most fundamentally* beyond the power of humans:
 1. the physical world, with forces that cannot be controlled by us (**Job 38**)
 2. Satan, and the evil cosmic powers of darkness all around us (**Ephesians 6:12**)
 3. death, and its stalking of men, spreading to all without exception (**Romans 5:12**)

4. the two creatures applied to Job
 - a. **read 41:10-11:** if “no [human being] is so fierce ... to stir up Leviathan,” who then is sovereign?
 - b. “who then is he who can stand before me?” and “who has first given to me, that I should repay him?” (**40:10b-11a**) = the key text that answers the (implied) question of **40:14**:
 1. **note:** the similarity of that second phrase to **Romans 11:35**: “who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” (Paul is probably **quoting** from **Job**)
 2. **remember:** God grants Job something (**v. 14a**): “I will also acknowledge to you that ...”
 - a. **if** you can bring down the *proud* (and powerful), I will acknowledge your sovereignty in the world; I will grant your “wisdom” if you can show to me your power to overcome evil
 3. but ... since you have no power (even over these creatures; **real or not**), how can you claim to have power over any other force, *including the forces of evil that are headed up by Satan?*
 4. **the point of the book is now clearly visible: men are sovereign over nothing; God is sovereign over everything**
 - a. since we are not “gods”, and have zero power over the forces that threaten to *undo* us, it is foolish to assume that we have power over more “benign” realities (like choosing him)
 - b. thus ... it was God who purposed for Job to suffer, for *whatever reasons* he had determined within his own sovereign councils, decrees, and purposes
 1. **i.e.** God purposes for Satan to bring suffering to Job, not for Satan’s “delight”, but to demonstrate that **God’s purposes will stand even where evil thinks it’s in control**
 2. **remember:** it was *God* who declared that Job was righteous, and *his purpose* in that declaration is not thwarted by Satan’s attack, Job’s whining, Job’s friends applying spurious logic, or any other force on earth or in heaven, *real or unreal*
 - c. **in the end:** Job is forced (as we are!) to trust that the Sovereign God does all things **according to a good and perfect plan**, a plan demonstrated with power, and one that will (in the end!) accomplish everything that God purposes *regardless of those who resist it*
 5. God’s sovereignty is not a “theological theory” embraced by reformed people in order to be “different” (or better!) – it is **the solid foundation which underpins the gospel of salvation**
 - a. **IOW:** God grants us something (**v. 14a**): instead of our own “right hand” saving us, God has granted us *his sovereign grace* to save us through the One who sits **at his right hand**