

JOB 38

GOD HIMSELF ENTERS THE DISCUSSION

In most disputes, the strife is over who shall have the last word. In this controversy, the three friends had tamely yielded this to Job; and then he had yielded it to Elihu. But after all the wranglings of the counsel at the bar, the judge upon the bench is the one who must ultimately have the last word. And so God here gave the final judgment upon the case, just as He does in every controversy – for by His definitive sentence, every man must stand or fall, and every cause must be won or lost. Job had often appealed to God, and he had talked boldly about how he would present his cause before Him; but when the Lord took the throne, Job had nothing to say in his own defense – he was silent before Him. It is not as easy a matter as some think to engage in a contest with the Almighty One. Job’s friends had sometimes appealed to the Lord, too – as in chapter 11: “O that God would speak!” And now, at length, He *did* speak – when Job, by Elihu’s clear arguments, was softened a little, and thereby prepared to hear what He was about to say. Hereby Elihu fulfilled the office of a true minister of the Gospel, which is to prepare the way of the Lord.

The intention of Jehovah in this discourse was to humble Job, and to bring him to repent of his passionate expressions concerning His Providential dealings with him. And He did this by calling upon Job to compare Divine eternity with his own time, Divine omniscience with his own ignorance, and Divine omnipotence with his own weakness. From out of the whirlwind, He challenged Job on various subjects; and thus He revealed Job’s nothingness, and His own sovereignty. If, in ordinary works of nature, Job was silent and puzzled; then how did he dare to pretend to dive into the counsels of God’s government, and to make judgment upon them? Herein, the Lord took up the argument begun by Elihu (who, out of all Job’s friends, came the nearest to the truth); but His matchless words excelled Elihu’s (and all other people’s words, too) in the loftiness of their style, just as greatly as thunder excels a whisper.

This whole chapter forms one beautiful subject from beginning to end. Let us observe, with holy solemnity, these strong and unequalled words of God. Job had presumed on much knowledge; therefore, the Lord began by questioning where Job had been when the world itself was created. What did he know of that grand event, and what account could he give of how darkness came forth into light? The Lord went on to describe – under the beautiful similitude of a new birth – how the deep waters were “born,” and how the Lord clothed them with the clouds. He appointed the full bounds of the waters; and amidst all their apparent violence in waves and billows, He determined – by a perpetual and un-

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ God Himself begins to speak, and He starts with a challenge – verses 1-3
- ❖ He proceeds to give particular proofs of Job’s inability to contend with Him, because of his ignorance and weakness – verses 4-41



breakable decree – how far they should extend, and no further. After this, the Lord took up the subject of light, and then of death and darkness; and He demanded if Job could tell Him where light dwells, and where the place of darkness is to be found. After dwelling upon these subjects, He proceeded to others that are just as strikingly descriptive of man’s ignorance and of

God’s wisdom. He spoke of rain, snow, ice, and hail. He spoke of the creation, government, and regular ordination of the heavenly bodies; and then, by a sweet transition, He called Job’s attention to the creation and power of the beasts of the earth. He demanded of him whether he could tell how the cry of the ravens is heard, when they are calling upon their Maker for food; and He asked by what means all their needs are supplied.

It would be presumptuous to offer our own thoughts upon such sublime representations. It is enough to observe that the evident intention of these words was to convince Job of the weakness, narrowness, and impotence of man – even in his highest attainments. For if man knows nothing of those common works of God in His kingdom of nature, how can he be competent enough to scan the ways of God in His kingdoms of Providence and grace? The works of the Lord’s Providence, as well as the work of His creation, can never be broken; and the work of redemption is no less firm – of which Christ Himself is both the Foundation and the Cornerstone. Every view of God only confirms more and more that mankind – even in his highest knowledge – is limited at every step he takes in exploring the ways and works of the Lord. As one of Job’s friends had remarked before, “Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?” (chapter 11:7)

If we are honest in examining ourselves, we will soon be brought to acknowledge that what we know is nothing, in comparison with what we do not know. By the tender mercy of our God, the Dayspring from on high has visited us, and brought light and liberty to those who sit in spiritual darkness (2 Cor. 4:6). It is presumptuous for us – who cannot even fully explain or explore the mysteries of our own planet – to dive into the depths of the Lord’s counsels. What folly it is to strive against Him! Certainly it is much more in our best interest to seek peace with Him, and to be recipients of His amazing grace and love!

Lord, we confess that we are indeed ignorant and foolish, even in regards to the mysteries of the earth that we live upon. In light of this, we acknowledge that we are unfit to probe into the hidden things of Your grace and Providence, and into Your wonderful dealings with our souls. Give us the grace of the Holy Spirit, and cause our proud minds to be bowed down before our Divine Teacher! Amen.