

**Title: The Supremacy of God****Text: Job 38-42**

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at Gold Country Baptist Church on 2-18-2007

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Last time I spoke, it was on the importance of being a God-centered person rather than man-centered, that God Himself is not driven by man but does everything for His own glory or His own sake, it's the end for which all is created, He cares more about His name than He does us, He loves Himself more than He loves you, He's committed to His glory more than you.

I believe God wants to dismantle the pride and props in our life that keep us from being centered on His glory. It's not about us, from Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to God be the glory. Today's message is a good follow-up to that theme as we look at the Supremacy of God, which is to say "God is Supreme" or "God is God and you are not." That sounds so simple and basic (of course God is God, not us) but in reality, many of us live like we don't believe that; we try to play the role of God sometimes, we try to control things, we may not say it out loud but we think our way is better than His, and we complain when things don't go the way we think they should, which ultimately is an insult to the supremacy and sovereignty of God over all things.

READ JOB 42:1-6

Growing up as a missionary kid, one of the most well-known stories to missions communities is the story in Ecuador of the Auca Indians (now called Waodani) who in 1956 killed Nate Saint, Jim Elliot, and the other young men who were speared to death while trying to reach a savage stoneage tribe with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Some of you know the story of the families that survived them, the pain, how like Job things didn't seem to make sense to these young families, God was still God and in His sovereign plan that cannot be thwarted, He allowed Elizabeth Elliot and Rachel Saint to have a ministry among those who had killed their loved ones and the gospel of Christ transformed their entire culture. I had the privilege of going deep in the Ecuador jungle and visiting that tribe and seeing where the events unfolded, the same week Steven Curtis Chapman's group was also coming to film a video telling this story. One of the songs he made in light of this story (and I think also in line with our text) goes as follows:

*And the pain falls like a curtain On the things I once called certain  
And I have to say the words I fear the most I just don't know  
And the questions without answers ... fall I must  
On this truth that my life has been formed from the dust*

*God is God and I am not  
I can only see a part of the picture He's painting  
God is God and I am man  
So I'll never understand it all  
For only God is God*

That is the message of Job, the supremacy of God, or to say it in simple words “God is God and I am not.” If we are to study who God is, it only seems appropriate that we look at what He says about Himself in this book. Job 38-41 is longest speech of God in the Bible, of all the times God has spoken audibly in human history, this is the longest, so I think we can see its importance.

Many believe Job is the oldest book of the Bible, written before Moses wrote Genesis, and during the same timeframe.

Job was not being punished for his sin, but nor was he without sin in all his speeches, as his friends with bad advice and theology provoked him to the point where he defended himself, and thought and talked wrongly about God, His trust wavered.

Job says “I repent” at end of book, so clearly there was something he needed to repent of

Read Job 10:1-3

Read Job 23:1-5, 32:1-2

Read Job 40:1-2 – God calls Job a “faultfinder” in others words, Job was guilty of blaming God / finding fault, and reproving him

Read Job 31:35

Job calls on the Almighty to answer him, and this finally takes place where we pick up in the text we’ll look at today:

**Job 38:1** Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said,

**Job 38:2** “Who is this that darkens counsel By words without knowledge?

Essentially, he is saying, who do you think you are? God says you have **words without knowledge** – in other words, you don’t know what you’re talking about. It’s like in Romans 9 where Paul says, “*who are you, O man to talk back to God? Shall the thing molded say to the molder, ‘why did you make me like this?’ Does not the potter have a right over the clay ...?*”

Job thought God was unfair, but he’s in for quite a lesson from God. This portion of scripture is not for the faint of heart, it is absolutely overwhelming.

J. Vernon McGee said in approaching this chapter: “I want to confess as we come to this part of the book that if I felt totally inadequate up to this point, now I don’t even know what to say. I feel like just simply being quiet, closing my Bible and stopping. But we cannot do that, so we will simply read what God says, and I will make a few comments as we go along.” (2:651)

**Job 38:3** “Now gird up your loins like a man, And I will ask you, and you instruct Me!

“**Gird up your loins**” is a military command for a soldier to brace himself for a fierce battle. “Before you can ask me the questions you want,” God says, “I have a few questions for you first.” At the end of the verse he says **you instruct Me!** “Instruct me, Job, educate me, help me out here, tell me how I should be doing things better as God, enlighten me” – there is irony and sarcasm here

**Job 38:4** “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell *Me*, if you have understanding,

These questions are clearly intended to put Job in his place. If Job did not create the world, what made him think he knew how things should be run? God says “**if you have understanding**” – it’s as if God is saying, “you think you know so much, Job, now just remind me, were you on my right or left side when I was creating planet earth, I can’t remember? When the Godhead was meeting to plan how to setup this universe, where were you again?

Job got his day in court with God, but it was not what he wanted.

- God doesn’t show up with answers, He shows up with questions.
- In fact, Job 38 is by far the chapter with the most questions in the whole Bible
- When God starts the questions in verse 4, there are more questions than even verses in this section!
- God gives Job the “bar exam of the universe” – over 70 questions
- Job is not going to be able to answer even one of the questions.

**Job 38:5** Who set its measurements? Since you know. Or who stretched the line on it?

There is divine sarcasm when God says “**since you know**” – some translation say “surely you know.” Were you helping me out then in setting the measurements and stretching everything to fit? And if not, what makes you think you can help me out now?

**Job 38:6** “On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone,

**Job 38:7** When the morning stars sang together And all the sons of God shouted for joy?

God is saying here, “tell me Job, the way the continents and land masses fit together, how does that work exactly? Who was it who did this? By the way, verse 7 is referring to angels and gives some help with the question what day of creation did God create angels since Genesis doesn’t mention them – this verse suggests they were created early in the week of creation.

Steve Lawson calls this chapter “Before the Supreme Court” in his excellent commentary on Job (much of what I have to say here is indebted to his work on this book).

Lawson writes: “The story of Job is one of high drama. Job had been accusing God, the Judge of heaven and earth, of injustice and had demanded his day in court to present his case against God ... But near the end of the proceedings the case took an unexpected turn.

Rather than God himself taking the witness stand as Job had hoped, God chose to put Job, the plaintiff, on the stand and examine him. No other witness was brought forward. No other evidence was submitted. No more cross-examination was needed. God Himself was in control of this entire court scene.” (*Job*, 326).

**Job 38:8** “Or *who* enclosed the sea with doors When, bursting forth, it went out from the womb;

**Job 38:9** When I made a cloud its garment And thick darkness its swaddling band,

**Job 38:10** And I placed boundaries on it And set a bolt and doors,

**Job 38:11** And I said, ‘Thus far you shall come, but no farther; And here shall your proud waves stop’?

The exam here now moves from cosmology to oceanography. Who sets the tides and who determines where sea level is? Who controlled the waters of the flood? God sovereignly controls the oceans and puts it in its place, and Job needs to stay put in his place as well. In verse 11, the ocean is personified as being proud and God said you need to stop here, and Job needed to know his limit as well.

Job is never told anything about God’s plan and why all the bad things happened to him. God doesn’t explain, He explodes. He doesn’t answer the WHY question, He answers the WHO question. God doesn’t reveal His grand design, He reveals Himself.

You might be tempted to think with all Job had been through, that when God showed up He would have wanted to make Job feel good about himself, boost his self-esteem, tell him to think positive and hang in there. Instead, God shatters him and humbles Job to the core, flattening him as low as he can go. This is actually the best thing God could do; draw all the attention to the Supremacy of God and to humble man to repentance, because only then can we experience blessing. Brokenness must come before happiness.

The Lord informs Job that He really does know what He is doing, even though Job may not. This, after all, is the essence of relationship with God. The strength to face difficult times is not found in knowing why we must face them, but in the confidence that our great God loves us completely and that He is still in charge, working all things together for His glory and our good.

**Job 38:12** “Have you ever in your life commanded the morning, *And* caused the dawn to know its place,

**Job 38:13** That it might take hold of the ends of the earth, And the wicked be shaken out of it?

God is saying essentially, how many times Job, have you commanded the sun to come up? Have you ushered in the evening even one time? You haven’t, have you, Job? I do that every single day, Job. I am the only one who can order the sunrise and sunset and I am also the only one with the right to order and command the events of your life!

**Job 38:14** “[the earth] is changed like clay *under* the seal; And they stand forth like a garment.”

The *MacArthur Study Bible* has this interesting note on v. 14: The Heb. for “takes on form” is “turned.” It conveys the idea that the earth is turned or rotated like a cylindrical seal rolled over the soft clay. Such rolling cylinder seals were found in Babylon. This speaks of the earth, rotating on its axis, an amazing statement that only God could reveal in ancient days. The dawn rolls across the earth as it rotates.

Job is one of the oldest books, but it has some amazing scientifically accurate statements. The Study Bible also points out how Job 26:10 talks about the circular horizon of the earth (cf. Isa. 40:22, Prov. 8:27), which supports the idea of the earth as a circular globe, another scientifically accurate statement at a time when many thought the world was flat.

- READ JOB 26:7. This is quite different from what other ancient cultures said about the earth:
- The Chinese thought the earth was square
- The Egyptians thought it was rectangular with a starry goddess arching her body over the earth while the sun and moon massaged her arms and legs
- Mesopotamians thought of the earth as a floating boat covered by an astrodome structure.
- Learned scholars in India would have said, “We all know the world is held up on the backs of giant elephants.”
- The Greeks maintained that the earth was held in place by the bulging biceps and massive shoulders of Atlas.
- South Sea islanders believed the earth was supported on the backs of giant tortoises.

The Bible, however, pictures the earth as round, rotating, and hanging on nothing

**Job 38:16** “Have you entered into the springs of the sea Or walked in the recesses of the deep?

**Job 38:17** “Have the gates of death been revealed to you, Or have you seen the gates of deep darkness?

**Job 38:18** “Have you understood the expanse of the earth? Tell *Me*, if you know all this.

God speaks with irony again “***if you know all this***” – the reality, is Job did not know much at all about the hidden things of the physical universe, so neither could he expect to have a hope of understanding the spiritual kingdom of God. You can’t even understand most of what you do see in My world, how can you expect to understand what you *can’t* see going on behind the scenes?

“The significant thing about these questions is that Job cannot answer a single one! God was driving home the point that Job must let God be God, the sovereign and omnipotent Creator who answers to no one.” (*KJV Study Bible*)

**Job 38:19** “Where is the way to the dwelling of light? And darkness, where is its place,

**Job 38:20** That you may take it to its territory And that you may discern the paths to its home?

**Job 38:21** “You know, for you were born then, And the number of your days is great!

Again, the mocking and challenge is dripping in verse 21. He tells Job “you were born then [you were there before I created all these things] and the number of your days is great!” As Job has not made a single sound, the sarcasm is as if God is saying: “You’re gonna have to speak up, Job, I can’t hear you. Tell me about how we created light and dark again.”

The reality is that Job is in the dark about God’s creation in the physical realm and is equally in the dark about God’s work in the spiritual realm. Man is ignorant about creation and also ignorant about how creation works.

**Job 38:22** “Have you entered the storehouses of the snow, Or have you seen the storehouses of the hail,

**Job 38:23** Which I have reserved for the time of distress, For the day of war and battle?

Next on the science portion of the exam is meteorology. Let's talk about something as everyday as weather, Job. Do you know how snow works and where and how snow and hail are produced and how the whole process keeps going? Can you give me a lecture on the inner workings of the clouds and precipitation, condensation, and the hydrological cycle?

**Job 38:24** "Where is the way that the light is divided, *Or* the east wind scattered on the earth?"

Job has no answers, he doesn't even have any guesses. He can't buy a vowel, he can't phone a friend, he can't ask the audience, there's no 50/50, no lifelines, no multiple choice, no grace, this test won't be graded on a curve, there's no extra credit or bonus questions – the point is being hammered home emphatically "I am God and you are not!"

**Job 38:25** "Who has cleft a channel for the flood, *Or* a way for the thunderbolt,

**Job 38:26** To bring rain on a land without people, *On* a desert without a man in it,

**Job 38:27** To satisfy the waste and desolate land *And* to make the seeds of grass to sprout?"

The obvious answer to these WHO questions is "God and God alone." Who does these things? "I am, and always will be, the Almighty." Job doesn't determine the weather, and he certainly shouldn't think he can determine how God should run his life.

**Job 38:28** "Has the rain a father? *Or* who has begotten the drops of dew?"

**Job 38:29** "From whose womb has come the ice? *And* the frost of heaven, who has given it birth?"

Job doesn't know the beginnings of these things, nor does he understand the beginnings of his trials before God's throne in heaven. The exam now moves to astronomy:

**Job 38:31** "Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades, *Or* loose the cords of Orion?"

**Job 38:32** "Can you lead forth a constellation in its season, *And* guide the Bear with her satellites?"

**Job 38:33** "Do you know the ordinances of the heavens, *Or* fix their rule over the earth?"

I think the intended effect of these verses is similar to the effect of Psalm 8:3 which we studied last time: "when I consider the heavens ... *what is man?*"

**Job 38:34** "Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, *So* that an abundance of water will cover you?"

**Job 38:35** "Can you send forth lightnings that they may go *And* say to you, 'Here we are'?"

If man can't tell clouds and lightning what to do, it's ludicrous to think he can tell God what to do. Lawson: "God's playing hardball, and Job doesn't even have a glove!"

**Job 38:36** "Who has put wisdom in the innermost being *Or* given understanding to the mind?"

**Job 38:37** "Who can count the clouds by wisdom, *Or* tip the water jars of the heavens,

God doesn't need man's wisdom, He's the source of all wisdom and infinitely wise. Don't ever let someone tell you that doctrines like the omniscience or transcendence of God aren't practical – God seems to think it's pretty important as He's gonna keep pounding this home, that his thoughts are higher than ours like the heavens above the earth.

Job isn't doing too well on these science questions so far, maybe this next section he'll do better. Verse 39 changes gears from God's creation to God's creatures for the next part of the exam, as Lawson says it's as if we're moving on to Double Jeopardy, "let's try animals for \$200."

**Job 38:39** "Can you hunt the prey for the lion, Or satisfy the appetite of the young lions,

**Job 38:40** When they crouch in *their* dens And lie in wait in *their* lair?

**Job 38:41** "Who prepares for the raven its nourishment When its young cry to God And wander about without food?"

God takes care of the animals every day, and He is certainly qualified to take care of man. He provides them their needs and He will provide Job what he needs as well (cf. Matt. 6:25-33).

Chapter 40 continues the exam portion on zoology.

- Verses 1-4 talk about the mountain goats and how he takes care of their newborns, and the implication is that he protects and provides for the littlest ones at their most vulnerable time, and he can surely do the same for Job
- Verses 5-8 talk about the wild donkey, which has the sense to stay in its place, and of course man must have the sense to stay in the place God puts us in
- Verses 9-12 talk about the wild ox. The donkey and ox are known to be stubborn, and God may be hinting at Job's stubbornness. "**Will you trust him because his strength is great ... will you have faith in him?**" Man does rely on animals to get work done, Job did trust his oxen because of their great strength – how much more should he trust God who has infinite strength? If he relied on brute beasts, shouldn't he be able to rely on a wise and all-knowing and loving Father?
- Verses 13-18 have a really interesting description of the ostrich. The ostrich doesn't really make sense to us, but God essentially says I knew what I was doing when I created this creature, and I always know what I'm doing, even when it doesn't make sense to you
- Verses 19-25 describe the horse, and how this animal can be confident because God made it that way, implying that God can also make Job confident as he faces life.
- Verse 26-30 takes Job to the aviary, to the hawk and the eagle. God takes it up another notch, to another level. God mysteriously governs the migration instincts of birds, and he also mysteriously governs events and people according to His will
- The eagle can see far better than man, and Job needs to realize he can't see everything God is doing with his eyes or from his vantage point on the earth.

One commentator tells the story of a college student who "went to class to take a final exam at the end of the semester. To his amazement he did not know the answer to any of the questions. Not one! He knew that he had no possibility of passing the exam, so he attempted to win the professor's favor with humor. Across the top of the exam page, he wrote, 'Only *God* knows the answer to these questions. Merry Christmas!' He turned in the paper and went home for the Christmas break.

During the holidays, the student received in the mail his exam that had been graded by the professor. At the top, it read in big red letters, “Then *God* gets 100, and *you* get 0%. Happy New Year!” (Lawson, 333)

Job had failed this exam miserably – he hasn’t even tried to answer a single question because he can’t. His knowledge isn’t even 5% compared to God on the chart, he’s got a big zero, man is not even on the chart when it comes to God’s knowledge!

READ 40:1-2 – God has presenting his opening words in this courtroom, and now it’s Job’s turn for what he had been asking for; to present his case before the judge. “Here’s your chance, Job, to plead for what’s fair and straighten me out.”

In verse 3-4, Job finally says something. READ TEXT.

“**I am insignificant**” (NASB) or NKJV: “I am *vile*”

- this is a word often translated “cursed”
- Job basically says “I’m gonna shut up now – I have to put my hand over my mouth, I have no answer”
- Job wanted to reason with God, but what he really needed was to rest in God. Job saw God’s greatness and his own littleness, and that was the turning point.
- As one man said “I had a million questions to ask God: but when I met Him, they all fled my mind; and it didn’t seem to matter.” (Wiersbe, *With the Word*)
- I’m sure Job was hoping this was the end of this trial
- But READ verses 6-8, God isn’t done yet, He’s just getting warmed up
- I’ve heard some Christians say from time to time, things like “it’s ok to question God, it’s ok to be angry at Him, just tell him, let it out, it’s good for you” – that might make sense to psychologists, but it shouldn’t to Christians who have read this and understood the force of this passage and the intended response

**Job 40:8** “Will you really annul My judgment? Will you condemn Me that you may be justified?”

**Job 40:9** “Or do you have an arm like God, And can you thunder with a voice like His?”

Round two, same truth: God is God and man is not! God is not accepting applications for a 4<sup>th</sup> person in the Trinity; His Supremacy and Omniscience should devastate us.

You might think, “Wow, I don’t like to think that God would come this way to a man who has suffered like Job with such force, He’s being kind of hard on Job, I don’t like to think of God this way.”

But our understanding of God needs to be the true God revealed in Scripture, what we LIKE to think about God is really idolatry if it does not take into account the fullness of how God is revealed in Scripture. God is God! He owes us nothing, what we think of Him has no bearing on who He really is. If this section seems too harsh or severe of God in your mind, I would suggest you don’t realize how serious and severe sin is.

**Job 40:10** “Adorn yourself with eminence and dignity, And clothe yourself with honor and majesty. **Job 40:11** “Pour out the overflowings of your anger, And look on everyone who is proud, and make him low.



**Job 40:12** “Look on everyone who is proud, *and* humble him, And tread down the wicked where they stand.

This is why God keeps going – to humble Job all the way down – and this was not cruelty but because God loved Him.

John Piper writes: *When Job was shaken by suffering long enough the sediment of pride was stirred up into his life and showed itself when Job tried to justify himself at God's expense. What we have seen so far then is that Job's suffering has a twofold explanation: its purpose at the outset was to demonstrate God's value and glory and its ongoing purpose was to refine Job's righteousness. His suffering is not punishment. It is not a sign of God's anger. Job's pain is not the pain of the executioner's whip but the pain of the surgeon's scalpel. The removal of the disease of pride is the most loving thing God could do, no matter what the cost. Remember the words of the Lord: Better to suffer the excruciating pain of a gouged out eye than to let any sin remain in your heart. If this does not seem obvious to you—namely, that sanctification is worth any pain on this earth—it is probably because you don't abhor sin and prize holiness the way God does and the way you should. Let us examine ourselves carefully at this point.*

In Job 40:15-23, God takes a break from the intense questions and just draws Job’s attention to the Behemoth.

- Many commentators say this is the hippopotamus
- But verse 17 compares his tail to a cedar tree, one of the biggest trees in that part of the world -> based on this, some have proposed that Behemoth is a large land mammal or reptile or dinosaur like brontosaurus or brachiosaurus. Remember that Job is the oldest book of the Bible, and he lived during the days of early Genesis and there’s evidence that not all the dinosaurs were extinct in his day.
- Verse 19 says that whatever this creature is, it’s “the first among the works of God” – in other words, the greatest or biggest creature he made.
- Verse 23 says it’s such a massive creature that even if a raging river was as high as its mouth, it’s not affected
- Verse 24 says that nobody can capture or tame this creature.

Chapter 41 presents the Leviathan

- Many say this is the crocodile
- But verse 22 says it has a strong neck which rises up,
- Verses 31-32 and Psalm 104 describes this creature as a deep sea creature, some passages even refer to it as some sort of sea serpent
- Apparently some marine reptile or dinosaur or creature now extinct, the descriptions suggest this creature might be where dragon legends came from, as just about every ancient culture has stories or descriptions of a creature like this
- The important thing is that verse 34 climaxes with a great rebuke to Job’s pride

The point is that if Job is so inferior to God’s creation and creatures, he is infinitely inferior to the Creator of all. Never forget that God has the right to do whatever He pleases whenever He wants with whoever He wants, and He doesn’t need to ask our permission! The Lord is the Potter; we are the clay. He is the Shepherd, we are the sheep, He is the Master, we are the slaves. God is God and we are not!

Only in seeing and knowing God as He truly is and man as he truly is, will Job find the relief he is looking for.

**Job 42:1** Then Job answered the LORD and said,

**Job 42:2** “I know that You can do all things, And that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.

**Job 42:3** ‘Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?’ [Job quotes what God says, and then Job responds:] “Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.”

**Job 42:4** ‘Hear, now, and I will speak; I will ask You, and You instruct me.’ [again quoting what God said, Job replies]

**Job 42:5** “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; But now my eye sees You;

**Job 42:6** Therefore I retract, And I repent in dust and ashes.”

Some translations have “I abhor myself and I repent” or “I despise myself” or some looser ones have “I take back everything I said”

How to respond like Job:

1. Recognize God’s Supremacy and bow before it
2. Recognize God’s Sovereignty as your comfort (don’t be a complainer)
3. Restore a right view of God and low view of self
4. Repent of any known sins

*God is God and I am not*

*I can only see a part of the picture He’s painting*

*God is God and I am man So I’ll never understand it all*

*For only God is God*

*And the sky begins to thunder And I’m filled with awe and wonder*

*‘Til the only burning question that remains Is who am I*

*Can I form a single mountain*

*Take the stars in hand and count them*

*Can I even take a breath without God giving it to me*

*He is first and last before all that has been Beyond all that will pass*

*Oh, how great are the riches of His wisdom and knowledge*

*How unsearchable for to Him and through*

*Him and from Him are all things*

*So let us worship before the throne*

*Of the One who is worthy of worship alone*

*GOD IS GOD!*