

Answering the “Why” After the Storm
Job 38-42

We have all been affected by Hurricane Ike

- I am sure that this past week has been trying for all of us

It was amazing to witness this hurricane at home

- The fury of the wind
- The downpour of the rain
- The flash of the lightning

I was 15 when I last witnessed a hurricane

- I was living in South Carolina when Hurricane Hugo hit as a category 4
- Even though I was almost 4 hours inland from the coast, we still felt the effects from this storm

There was a feeling of helplessness during the hurricane

- You couldn't go outside
- For most of us, we didn't have power to watch the TV
- In the dark of the night, you couldn't see what was going on

I didn't sleep any during the storm

- My body was exhausted
- But my mind was wide awake

Many people have suffered damage as a result of Ike

- Fence damage
- Roof damage
- Water damage
- Wind damage

For others, the damage was quite more severe

- Death of loved ones
- Total loss of property
- Severe damage to cars, boats, and houses

The day before the hurricane, I was speaking to one of my neighbors

- She told me that she thought the storm should have gone more toward Beaumont
- Her rationale was that there were less people in this area of Texas and Houston should be spared

I disagree with her logic

- It assumes that Houston is somehow less worthy of damage just because we are larger in population
- It assumes that Beaumont is somehow more worthy of damage because it is smaller in population

If anything, this hurricane should remind us that we deserved a lot worse than we received

- From what I know, this church family has had no catastrophic damage or loss of life
- That is an amazing testimony to God's grace, mercy, and kindness

On Saturday morning after the storm, we realized that we had some water coming into our living room and kitchen

- So we began moving things out of those affected areas
- We knew that there would have to be construction, so we wanted to protect those things that we could

I went next door to Dorothy's where the kids were taking a nap

- The women are much better at organizing than I am

While I was at Dorothy's, I saw a sign hanging on her wall that read, "Thou shalt not whine"

- As funny as that is now, I needed that reminder then

I was very discouraged Saturday morning

- I had made all the necessary preparations
 - o Plywood on the windows
 - o Food and water stored
 - o Bathtubs and other containers filled with water

And yet, there was a steady stream of water flowing from our ceiling

- I felt very helpless
- I felt very discouraged

Five years ago, we were displaced out of our home for 31 days due to a water leak in the kitchen

- Those thoughts of living in a hotel room for that long came rushing back into my mind

So the Lord reminded me, "Thou shalt not whine"

- I needed that

I saw Dorothy's Bible on her desk, so I picked it up

- I was reading a psalm or two, but nothing was really "clicking," if you know what I mean
- Then God led me to a portion of God's Word that really "clicked"

I read about a man who had lost almost everything

- Livestock
- Home
- Children

He lost almost everything

- He still had his wife
- He still had his faith

His wife told him, "**Curse God and die!**" (Job 2:9)

- Not exactly the Proverbs 31 example, is it ladies?

But this man's faith was encouraging to me

- His faith was securely in the Lord

As you have probably guessed by now, this man's name was Job

- We will be focusing on this ancient book this morning

There is much to learn from this man and his life

- I pray that God will use His Word to minister to your heart this morning

Perhaps you are here like I was on Saturday – very discouraged

- I pray that you will be encouraged

Perhaps you are hardened and calloused to the realities around you

- I pray that you will be softened

Whatever your need is, I know that God can meet it

The first chapter of Job opens us to tell us a little about this man, Job

- The very first verse tells us a lot about this man, “**There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job, and that man was blameless, upright, fearing God, and turning away from evil**” (Job 1:1)
- So Job was a godly man who was clearly walking with the Lord

We are told about his earthly possessions

- 7 sons
- 3 daughters
- Thousands of livestock
- Many servants

Then God tells us something that we would never know otherwise

- Satan approaches God

God then *recommends* Job to Satan

- Satan doesn't ask for Job
- God volunteers him!

Satan accuses God of overprotecting Job

- So God, in essence, allows Satan to torment Job
 - o Job loses his livestock
 - o Job loses his servants
 - o Job loses his children

But Job does not lose his faith

- Look at Job 1:20-22, “**Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped. 21 And he said, ‘Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I shall return there. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD.’ 22 Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God.**”

What an amazing response to a severe trial!

- Job worshipped – he didn't turn to idols
- Job humbled himself – he didn't exalt himself
- Job blessed God – he didn't blame God

It is a sad reality that we oftentimes take credit for the “good” things that God does

- And we blame God for the “bad” things that He does

Of course, “bad” and “good” are relative terms from our biased perspective

But not so with Job

- He didn't blame God

Then in chapter 3, Job “**cursed the day of his birth**” (3:1)

- In this chapter, Job basically asks the question, “Why?”

I would assume that all of us have, at times, asked that question, haven't we?

- Why did You allow my loved one to die, Lord?
- Why did You allow my marriage to end, Lord?
- Why did You allow my children to turn from You, Lord?
- Why did You allow my home to be damaged, Lord?
- Why, Lord?

Job expresses that thought clearly in chapter 3

- It is one of the most depressing chapters in all of the Bible
- Job is at his lowest point

If we were writing the script to the book of Job, we would immediately have God coming in to rescue this man

- God would explain why He did what He did
- Job and God would once again have fellowship
- And the story of Job would be complete

But God didn't ask for our input

- We have to see what God intended for us to glean from this book

Chapters 4-37 read almost like a tennis or a ping pong match

- One of Job's four friends speaks
- Then Job responds
- Back and forth – for 34 chapters!

Here is a breakdown of the percentage of who speaks in these chapters

- Eliphaz – 11%
- Bildad and Zophar – each with 5%
- Elihu – 16%

Job speaks nearly 50% of the content of these chapters

- After all, he is responding to the “counsel” of his friends

That only leaves 13% of the content of this book for God to speak

- That is less than 1/7 of the content

But friends, God doesn't have to speak much to convey His point

- As a matter of fact, after chapter 2, God doesn't even speak audibly until Job 38:1

I would encourage all of you to go home today and read Job 38-42

- Read it slowly
- Read it prayerfully

After allowing Job's friends to talk to him for 34 chapters, God intervenes and sets the record straight

- In an economy of words, God speaks directly to Job (not to his friends) and tells him some awesome things

With a touch of sovereign sarcasm, God rebukes Job for his ignorance of things Divine

- God overwhelms him with things that Job had no control over or knowledge of

Of course, this was intentional on the part of God

- Job had a very small perception of what was transpiring on the Earth – let alone the full scope of creation
- Job was living inside of his own box and not thinking of the bigger picture

So God pulls back the curtains and allows Job to see more of the world than Job knew previously

- I think that you and I will have our eyes opened as well

In chapters 4-37, Job speaks a lot

- In these 33 chapters, he speaks a total of 487 verses
- That is 56% of this section of the book!

But when it comes to the end of the book, chapters 38-42, Job isn't the predominant speaker

- In these five chapters, Job speaks only 9 verses
- That is 7% of this section of the book

God, not Job, is the One who speaks the most in the closing section of the book

- What God has to say is far superior to what Job – or anyone else for that matter – has to say

In earlier chapters of this book, Job longed for God to speak

- But God had remained silent up to this point

Throughout earlier chapters, Job's friends had pretended to speak for God

- But God now sets the record straight

I think this morning as we all sit here licking our wounds, we need a fresh reminder of the greatness and grandeur of our God

- We need to have a God-centered perspective on this time of trial and hardship
- We need to be thankful to the awesome God who protected all of us from personal injury

After 35 chapters of ongoing conversation between Job and his friends, God speaks

- The manner in which He speaks is rather interesting

God has spoken in different ways to different people in the OT

- He spoke to Moses in a burning bush
- He spoke to Jacob in a dream involving a ladder from heaven
- He spoke to Elijah from a gentle blowing of the wind

But how did God speak to Job?

- Look with me at Job 38:1, “**Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind**”

What a marvelous sight this must have been!

- This mighty whirlwind and God speaking out of it!

God used similar experiences to communicate with Moses and Elijah

- But Job was the first to experience such a Divine encounter with God

The Text tells us that, “**the LORD answered Job**”

- That is Yahweh
- The covenant-keeping God

We have to keep in mind that Job is the earliest book of the Bible

- Not earliest in terms of events
- But earliest in terms of age

Job had no knowledge of God’s covenant with Moses

- That would come much later

The LORD questions Job, “**Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?**” (38:2)

- God is intentionally confronting Job, exposing his weakness, ignorance, and inabilities

Then God challenges Job to get ready for a Divine interrogation, “**Now gird up your loins like a man, and I will ask you, and you instruct Me!**” (38:3)

- Job is now the one who needs to listen to the always-true counsel of the Almighty

How different this is from Job’s comment in 31:35, “**Oh that I had one to hear me! Behold, here is my signature; let the Almighty answer me!**”

- Well Job, you got what you asked for!

For 70 consecutive verses, the LORD exposes Job’s ignorance of the universe

- God, not Job, knows the full outworkings of creation

In 38:4-7, God questions Job regarding creation, “**Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding, who set its measurements, since you know? Or who stretched the line on it? On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?**”

- Obviously, Job wasn’t there at creation
- God is eternal, predating the creation

We would have no knowledge of creation outside of God’s written Word

- God knows it all
- He is the Creator

Job 38-39 chronicles God’s infinite knowledge of His creation¹

- The sea and water levels (38:8-11)
- The rising of the sun (38:12-15)
- The Underworld (38:16-18)
- Light and darkness (38:19-21)
- Control over snow, hail, wind, flood, thunder, and water (38:22-30)
- Constellation of stars (38:31-33)
- Clouds and lightning (38:34-38)
- Lions and ravens (38:39-41)

¹ R.L. Alden, *The New American Commentary, Job*, 367.

- The birth of mountain goats and deer (39:1-4)
- The travels of the wild donkeys (39:5-8)
- The unpredictability of the wild oxen (39:9-12)
- The foolish nature of ostriches (39:13-18)
- The strength of horses (39:19-25)
- The provision for hawks (39:26-30)

No one here this morning could answer these questions that were given to Job

- Only God Himself knows the full extent of His creation
- Those of us who have taken time to contemplate just one element of His creation stand in amazement at His infinite knowledge

While we were on vacation a few weeks back, we went to a zoo in Michigan

- One of the animals on exhibit was the bald eagle
- It happens to be one of my favorite animals
- That I can remember, it was the first time that I had ever been within 20 feet of this majestic animal

Anyone who has studied the bald eagle is amazed at its physical prowess and power

- They can see a fish in the water while soaring several hundred feet in the air
- Their wingspan is 6½ to 8½ feet

Suppose you could spend the rest of your life studying the bald eagle

- You still couldn't have infinite knowledge of this creature
- Besides, your knowledge would be limited to this one species

Job lived long before the advent of the Internet, encyclopedias, and other helpful resources for research

- Job knew what he could observe with his eyes and ears

God opens up his perspective by intentionally questioning him on matters that were outside his scope of knowledge

Job was consumed with thoughts of himself

- His world had grown incredibly small

What Job needed was a healthy dose of God

- Job needed to submit to God instead of arguing his innocence

Job was coming to realize that the answer to the "why" of life was really a pursuit of the knowledge of God

- Only God has the answers to the "why" issues of life

In chapter 40, the LORD told Job, "Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty? Let him who reproves God answer it."

- Job is labeled, "the faultfinder"
- The LORD is labeled, "the Almighty"

This is similar language to that in Romans 9, where Paul states, "You will say to me then, 'Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?' 20 On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, 'Why did you make me like this,' will it? 21 Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use, and another for common use?" (9:19-21)

- God has the ultimate “right” to do what He wills, doesn’t He?
- He certainly doesn’t need our permission to act

The events of this past week may have some people saying, “It wasn’t fair that the storm affected our lives here in Houston!”

- But friend, it is fair that we were protected while others suffered catastrophic damage?

So it’s not a matter of being fair

- We have to come to understand – just as Job did – that God alone has the answers to the “why” after the storm

So how would you feel if God were to ask you these questions related to His creation?

- Would you feel a bit overwhelmed?
- Would you feel ignorant?

That is precisely how Job felt

- We have the very words of Job recorded in 40:3-5, “Then Job answered the LORD and said, ‘Behold, I am insignificant; what can I reply to Thee? I lay my hand on my mouth. Once I have spoken, and I will not answer; even twice, and I will add no more.’”

Job speaks of himself as being, “insignificant”

- The Hebrew root word has the broader meaning of small, light, little, or thin

When the Old Testament writers speak of God’s glory, they use a word that conveys the thought of heavy or weighty

- Something that has substance or mass

When Job compares himself to the greatness of God’s glory, he says that he is small, light, little, and insignificant

- This is precisely the way in which we should view ourselves every day of our lives

I think this is actually a benefit of experiencing something like a hurricane, tornado, flood, or earthquake

- It reminds us that we are little and insignificant
- It reminds us that God is great, glorious, and majestic

As I sat there during the early morning hours of Hurricane Ike, I couldn’t help but be overwhelmed by the power of God

- The power to blow winds upward of 100 mph
- The power to direct billions of rain drops
- The power to spin a sphere of mass in a counter-clockwise direction

Many people have personified Hurricane Ike, as if it had a mind of its own

- “I hope that Ike doesn’t cause too much damage”
- “Ike really destroyed the Galveston area”

Hurricane Ike was but a part of God’s creation

- God sovereignly directed that storm
- Every atom, breath of wind, and raindrop was entirely under the sovereignty and control of Almighty God

Job is overwhelmed as God interrogates him

- Job can't answer the questions that God asks of him!

Job 40:4 tells us how Job responded physically, "I lay my hand on my mouth"

- This was an action of surrender and submission
- He had said enough already

But God was not finished with Job yet

- Look at Job 40:6-7, "Then the LORD answered Job out of the storm, and said, 'Now gird up your loins like a man; I will ask you, and you instruct Me.'"

This is almost identical to what God told Job back in 38:1

- He repeats it as a way of introducing another wave of interrogation
- God wants Job to be humbled even further

God mocks Job's audacity to question what God does

- In Job 40:8-14, God overwhelms Job with the sovereign control of all creation that God possesses

It is almost as if God told Job, "If you think you can do a better job than Me, then go ahead!"

- "Will you really annul My judgment? Will you condemn Me that you may be justified? Or do you have an arm like God, and can you thunder with a voice like His?" (Job 40:8-9)
- Of course, Job was completely inadequate to do what only God can do

God is shown to be in complete control over who is humbled and who is exalted in verses 11-14

- Anyone here want that job?
- Not me!

Then, in 40:15-41:34, God speaks of two particular animals

- Behemoth (40:15-24)
- Leviathan (41:1-34)

Regarding Behemoth, some have suggested that God is speaking of the hippopotamus

- But not all the descriptions fit the hippo
- For example, the hippo has a short tail, but verse 17 speaks of the strength of this animal's tail

Regarding Leviathan, some have suggested that this speaks of the crocodile, whale, or shark

- But all of these fall short of the total portrait that God gives

Who then is Behemoth and Leviathan?

- Obviously, God knows
- We think also that Job knew

Perhaps these were mighty dinosaurs

- Perhaps these were animals that are now extinct

Whatever they were, God chose to name these two animals that could easily overpower humans

- Who would dare to stand against any of these two animals?

Look at 41:10, “No one is so fierce that he dares to arouse him; who then is he that can stand before Me?”

Job would have never thought of taking on Behemoth or Leviathan on his own

- And yet, Job didn't think twice about impugning the very nature of God Himself!
- God was much stronger than Behemoth or Leviathan!!

Job had already confessed his insignificance back in 40:3-5

- But God is leading Job to a second confession in 42:1-6, “Then Job answered the LORD, and said, ‘I know that Thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of Thine can be thwarted. Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge? Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. Hear, now, and I will speak; I will ask Thee, and do Thou instruct me. I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees Thee; therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes.’”

Notice the dramatic shift in Job's perspective

- Previously, he demanded that he speak and God listen
- Now he insists that he listen and God speak

Listen to what John MacArthur says about this second confession from Job, “Job's confession and repentance took place finally. He still did not know why he suffered so profoundly, but he was done complaining, questioning, and challenging God's wisdom and justice. He was reduced to such utter humility, crushed beneath the weight of God's greatness, that all he could do was repent for his insolence. Without answers to all of his questions, Job quietly bowed in humble submission before his Creator and admitted that God was sovereign (cf. Is. 14:24; 46:8–11). Most importantly for the message of the book, Job was still diseased and without his children and possessions, and God had not changed anything (except for the humbling of the heart of his servant). Satan had been proven completely wrong in the charges he brought against Job and in thinking he could destroy true saving faith; Job's companions were completely wrong in the charges they brought against him; but most critically, Job himself was completely wrong in the charges he had raised against God. He expressed his own sorrowful regret that he had not just accepted God's will without such ignorant complaints and questions.”²

- This was a hard lesson for Job to learn
- And it is a hard lesson for us to learn as well

God is committed to making us more like Christ

- He is committed to making us complete, not comfortable

It is sad that it took the events of the book of Job to bring this man to a point of repentance, trust, and reliance upon God

- But it is also sad that it takes a hurricane to bring us to that point

I have certainly had my share of times this week when I had to repent for my complaining, murmuring heart attitude

- God will not honor that arrogant attitude
- He opposed the proud, but gives grace to the humble

If you have been humbled by the events of this past week, consider yourself blessed!

- You are exactly where God wants you to be!

² The MacArthur Study Bible, (electronic edition) Job 42:1.

Over the next few weeks and months, there will be many questions asked

- When will my adjustor come out?
- When will my power be restored?
- When will all this debris be taken away?

But those are the simple questions

- Those relate to the temporal

Ask yourself the harder, spiritual questions

- What does God want me to learn about Him through this?
- How have I been guilty of calling God's righteous judgment into question through my complaints, bitterness, and hardened heart?
- How can I bring God glory in the midst of this tragedy?

The last chapter of Job relates how the LORD told Eliphaz about how wrong he and the other two friends were in their assessment of Job

- Verse 7 tells us, “**you have not spoken of Me what is right as My servant Job has**”

These three friends had to go to Job and offer a sacrifice for their sins

- How humbling this must have been!

The book ends on a note of restoration

- “**And the LORD restored the fortunes of Job when he prayed for his friends, and the LORD increased all that Job had twofold.**” (42:10)

Job lived 140 years after these events

- He saw many generations of his family

I can only imagine that Job frequently spoke about what God taught him during this time in his life

- Terrible loss
- Terrible counsel by his friends
- Terrible pain
- But wonderful, deep knowledge of God
- Experiential awareness of the character of God

The rebuke for us is that we have the entire canon of Scripture

- We have the 66 books of the Bible that God intended for us to have
- *And yet, how easily do we still accuse God of doing something wrong – in our estimation*

Why did God send Hurricane Ike?

- I don't know the full answer to that
- I think it is the wrong question to ask

I think the better question is, “What are we to learn from God during this time?”

- I can think of a few answers³
- I would encourage us all to share other ideas with one another

³ Ibid.

The book of Job teaches us some invaluable spiritual truths:

1. There are matters going on in heaven with God that believers know nothing about; yet, they affect our lives
2. Even the best effort at explaining the issues of life can be useless
3. God's people do suffer. "Bad" things happen all the time to good people, so one cannot judge a person's spirituality by his painful circumstances or successes
4. Even though God seems far away, perseverance in faith is a most noble virtue since God is good and one can safely leave his life in His hands
5. The believer in the midst of suffering should not abandon God, but draw near to Him, so out of the fellowship can come the comfort—without the explanation
6. Suffering may be intense, but it will ultimately end for the righteous and God will bless abundantly.

Within a year, most people will have forgotten about Hurricane Ike

- Life will go on
- Things will resume like before
- Homes will be rebuilt or repaired
- The bad memories will be forgotten

But God intends for us to remember these hard lessons

- He wants us to maintain a humble, submissive, trusting attitude in the face of trials

Job died with many questions unanswered

- That we know of, God never told him the answers to many of his questions

We will never know all the answers to the questions of this life

- But we need to come to a place of trust in God

If you are here and you do not have a relationship with Jesus Christ, then this is your greatest need this morning

- You need to have your sins forgiven
- You are spiritually separated from the holy and righteous God

If you are here as a believer, I would encourage you to take some time and reconsider these chapters from the book of Job

- Learn a lesson from Job
- Speak less and listen more