

God Speaks

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[0 : 0 0] Okay, for a short time this morning we're going to look at these chapters. It can by definition only be an overview, but I'm thinking I can probably go on as long as I like because it's so wet outside you don't want to get wet again, and I can really take advantage of that this morning.

But I'll try not to because I know there's children downstairs who will need their lunch and grown-ups too I guess. But as I've said this is the longest direct communication from heaven to earth in the whole Bible.

This is where God reveals directly to us more about himself than in any part of scripture and it is unbroken. It's exactly not what we would have thought.

If we'd been in the place where we say, okay God, you've got four chapters of the Bible to give us a real insight into yourself, I guess this would have been well down the line.

We wouldn't have thought this is what God wanted primarily to tell us. This is a crucial chapter, a chapter section for our understanding of God and for the whole Bible so that we know who God is.

[1 : 1 3] This by definition as I've said must be a brief encounter. I hope that it is only a dip into this chapter. I hope you will go and dig from here.

Dipping today you will go I hope as we encourage you to do to dig deeper, return to it, find books that explain it that are good and helpful because there's a vast amount of truth about God in here far beyond what we can look at today or even understand.

But what we do notice at this point and we've kind of hinted at this throughout our study is that what Job needed most was not a clean cut and a simple black and white answer to his suffering which was very real and which we don't minimise in any way whatsoever but what he needed clearly was an encounter with God.

That was the beginning of the answer for Job and where he eventually was able to repent and give thanks and praise to his God. That was Job's greatest need and in his cries where God was unjust and God was silent and God was unfair, he was looking for God to come and speak to him.

That is what is happening here. God's was answering Job. He was giving Job his greatest need which was communication with him.

[2 : 3 5] It wasn't mediated, it didn't come through a book, it wasn't through another prophet, in Elihu takes a backstage here and it's God who speaks directly, we don't know how he does it but he speaks directly to Job here.

And for us this same is true, is it not? Our greatest need is not a paperback that will tell us how to cope with suffering and that has all the answers to the problems of humanity and the world in which we live.

Our greatest need is an encounter with God ourselves in our lives so that we have not just knowledge about him from the Bible but we know him.

We've come to know him as Lord and Savior. It's as real and personal as knowing anybody else, although it's by faith and it's spiritual, it's not a physical knowledge as in ordinary relationships.

So can I give you a brief overview of these four chapters? I'm going to say three things in this overview shortly and it will be short.

[3 : 42] This brief one. Three words that for me sum up this section of Job. The first is it's hugely evocative, wonderful words, tremendous descriptions.

God we're told twice it breaks into two sections. I'll say a little bit more about that in a minute. But in both sections it is introduced with God speaks to Job out of the storm.

So it begins in a dramatic way is that God speaks powerfully and movingly from a storm. You know, and often that there's so much imagery within this section that we recognize as part of scripture also in its description of God.

God speaking out of the storm not in this instance in the gentle still small voice, but out of the storm. And there's this verbal imagery and poetry that come through this passage that are quite remarkable.

It must have been amazing to have heard God's voice in the storm and what he said. There's beautiful artistry and there's sharp descriptions.

[4 : 52] There's much darkness and there's a great deal of light. And there's some scathing humour in this passage.

Someone said to me this week that this passage of Job God seems like quite sassy in the way he speaks and quite humorous and but dark in his humour and quite provocative in what he says.

And I think sometimes we've just become so tame in everything we do. Yeah, we've got everything neatly and tidily in boxes about God and about life and about ourselves and we're neat and polite and correct and good and upright.

But we've lack a bit of character sometimes don't we? We lack a bit of evocative Christian living because there's a tameness about us that isn't matched by God.

And God is uniquely powerful and glorious and testing in his revelation of himself here. Maybe it's political correctness in the society we live, but there's just seems in leadership and in politics and in sport and in everything.

[5 : 58] There's a lack of characters. There's a lack of people who are able to have a controlled wildness in their lives. So it's very evocative.

It's also secondly, in terms of an overview, hugely challenging. There's over 60 questions that God asks of Job here and it's a complete role reversal.

He's up to this point, God has been in the dock. Job and his questions and his doubts and his fears have all been at God who is in the dock.

And there's an amazingly clear role reversal here where God asks Job and by implication all of us, many, many questions.

And it's a powerful apologetic questions that are powerful apologetic. We don't necessarily need the answers, but the questions are a powerful apologetic for the Gospel.

[7 : 00] And part of that was surely to take Job out of himself, take him out of his intensely insular inward thinking and dealing with his own issues and problems, which we are very real, we know and understand.

And God is drawing him out, showing him a bigger picture, a bigger world, a bigger reality that Job up to this point hasn't really contemplated or thought about.

So evocative and challenging. And the third word I would use in terms of the overview would be revelatory. It's stunning. There's no, it just doesn't parallel any other passage in the whole Bible or indeed of any kind of literature anywhere.

The scientific, cosmological, biological insight of these four chapters is stunning. And he speaks culturally into Job's life.

There's no doubt about that, into Job's culture and into Job's world. But he speaks well beyond that also, well beyond that. There's some great books that speak about the science of this passage, of these passages.

[8 : 08] And the cosmology and the things that God says that have been since discovered in science and technology that only God could know. I haven't got time to go into that.

It's as if he's taking Job and Job and us are in this tiny little puddle in our lives. And he's opening up this vast ocean and saying, look beyond that small, tiny puddle in which you live and recognize that I am sovereign over the vast oceans of the universe and far beyond our understanding.

It's revealed in an amazing cosmic and cultural and creative way. And it's framed interestingly using the Covenantal Revelation of himself.

The Lord, you know, we have it in the small capital letters, the Lord. We know that as the name of God that was later in Scripture revealed as the saving God, as the Lord who has revealed to Moses at the burning bush, who will I say sent me?

Moses says, and God says to Moses, he says, tell them I am sent you. I am who I am, the Lord, the Covenant saving, rescuing. That's his name. That's the name that's associated with the rescue from Egypt, the rescue of the Israelites and Jesus Christ's salvation, because Jesus is condemned by the religious authorities because not because he was a bad grammarian and was uneducated when he said, before Abraham was born, I am.

[9 : 51] But he was claiming divinity. He was claiming the name of God before Abraham was born, I am. They picked up stones to stone him. Before he claimed it was blasphemous if he wasn't God.

And that is the name that is used here of the living God. The sovereign who became the carpenter and who was nailing wood and is nailed to wood and who rescues us through that and his resurrection.

We consider him today. There's links throughout this to the saving work of Jesus Christ, which is so significant. So that's a brief overview. I hope you're still with me.

It's okay. Now we're going on the structure. It's not boring. The structure is not boring. It's great and it's simple. So stick with me and we can move through it in our own time.

The structure is it's split into two, although it's four chapters. So you begin chapter 38 and it goes right through chapter 38, right through chapter 39 to the beginning of chapter 40, verse 2.

[10 : 58] And that's where Job first answers. And then we have a second section from the verse 6 of chapter 40 through chapter 40 and chapter 41.

So it's split into two sections and the two sections deal with two different questions that Job has accused God about two different issues.

And the first one, God is answering Job's accusation that God didn't know what he was doing. God doesn't know what he's doing in this suffering.

What's he doing? I would do it differently. I know better. That's kind of the argument the job has had through the book. And God says, Job, you're questioning my perfect will.

He uses the word counsel. You as this who darkens my counsel with words without knowledge. Brace yourself like a man. I will question you. You shall answer me. So all of this first section, these two chapters about the counsel or the will or the mind of God is what God is answering in this section.

[12 : 06] Job he says, you know better. Could you run the universe? Were you there from the beginning job? Do you know all the answers and he unfolds how his knowledge is perfect and how his will and how his mind is perfect and how that answers Job's questions about God not knowing what's going on.

It's not irrelevant. How many people do you know? And I say, God doesn't really know what's going on. Oh, yeah, he kind of responds to evil. And the cross was just a risk. You know, the disciples made good of a bad event when Jesus was crucified in the cross.

And it wasn't really planned or anything like that. God doesn't really know what he's doing. And when evil comes into your life, is that the same question suffering? God doesn't really know what's going on. I'm hoping he'll just rescue me from it.

But he's surprised by it. He didn't know what's happening. And even if he didn't want, he doesn't want it to happen. Never. So we have all these questions that become hugely relevant to us in our lives.

And the cosmos, he answers verses one to 38 of chapter 38, you've got this great journey through the cosmos that God as Creator gives.

[13 : 16] Were you there, Job? Were you there? Are you behind the laws of nature, Job? You know about the law of gravity, the centrifugal forces? Did you hear the angels sing songs of joy when the creation was finished?

And then he goes on to speak about the sea bursting forth, you know, in these early days, who shot up the sea behind doors when it burst forth from the womb? Now I think that speaks about the sea and the reality of sea and land.

But I think it also potentially points towards chaos and the introduction of evil into the world, which for the ancient Near East people, the sea was often and very always a symbol because it was fearful and dark and deep and chaotic and it spoke of evil.

And yet God says here, you know, when it burst forth, making me question, and I just leave this question, is evil and inevitable?

And this is maybe not the right word because I can't think of another one. Is evil a necessary byproduct of God's creation? Was it an inevitable and necessary byproduct of creation?

[14 : 23] When creation happened, was it inevitable that evil would have entered into the world and burst forth? Yet God says thus far you may come and no further.

It is limited by God's command. And this whole section speaks about the constructive and the destructive power of nature, that none of it is random, that all of it's under his will, his counsel and his knowledge.

Even darkness and death, you know, he speaks to Job and says, have you been at the gatehouse of death? Do you not? God knows all of darkness and death.

Everything is encompassed by his will. The gift he goes on to speak about of wisdom and understanding, all of these things. Science and astronomy that come under that wisdom.

Do you know Job? Do you have all the answers? Our explanations, our discoveries, you know, we make new discoveries in science all the time. We shouldn't be afraid of science. And we shouldn't be, I rejoice when science comes up with new discoveries.

[15 : 27] It's wonderful because that is God's home territory. God knows all about it anyway. It's no surprise to him, it's no discovery for him. It is for us and that's wonderful.

We'll continue to discover. And science is great, don't be afraid of it. We're not Neanderthal. We're not plebs. We can take and see and know and rejoice in science.

Because God is the sovereign over that and he is the one who gives us knowledge. So in this section he defends his perfect counsel, his perfect will by explaining the cosmos.

And he then goes on in the section in chapter 39 particularly, well the end of 38, it's actually verse 39.

If you see that, right through chapter 39 he speaks about his counsel, his knowledge, not in the cosmos but in nature as in particularly wild animals.

[16 : 31] And it's a marvellous chapter. But it's selective. It does kind of, there is a slight following of the creation model, unveiling of the creation model but I think it's very much phrased in terms of selective animals, mainly wild animals.

And I think what he's trying to do is he's taking the cosmos which is well out of Job's ability to know about or understand or control and then he moves into the area of animal, not domestic animals but wild animals and say, look you don't even have control of our wild animals Job and yet you question my will and my knowledge and my insight.

And you've got this wonderful section where he describes many of the untamed animals of the day. God knows them. He loves them.

There's an intimacy and a creativity and a variety in this passage that is beautiful. You know, David Attenborough, eat your heart out.

This is great stuff that we, I would love to think, I'd love to know what he thinks about this chapters. He's not a disinterested despot as our God. You can almost sense a sovereign smile as he explains these wild animals and his knowledge of them and his perfect knowledge of them.

[17 : 59] One or two things, he seems to have a concern for the young. He speaks quite often about the young animals here and how to feed the young animals. There needs to be death and destruction further up the line and so there's a kind of mixture of life and death and the cycle of nature going on that he knows about.

He mentions laughter. He uses lovely descriptions of the animals laughing variously, which I think is wonderful, descriptive imagery for us to consider the wild donkey who laughs at the commotion in the town because he's out free in the mountains and the ostrich.

Oh, it's such a great passage. I love the ostrich. I think Christianity should have the ostrich in its kind of national anthem emblem. It's just great because it's stupid.

It doesn't have much wisdom. The man when it runs, when it runs, it laughs at a horse and rider. Is that not one of the most beautiful illustrations in the whole of the Bible?

You can imagine an ostrich with his big fat, thin legs and big fat feet running really fast past a horse and laughing its head off. You know, I'm much faster than you because God gave me that speed.

[19 : 13] He did make me wise so that other animals can take my babies because I'd just lay the eggs on the ground. But it's just remarkable.

And then you have the picture of the wild, not the wild, but the horse, the battle horse, the horse that's used in battle.

Does remind me anyway of the black horses of the Nazgul and the Lord of the Rings, snorting, powerful beast that he describes here.

And the migratory computers of the hawk and of the eagle and all that goes on. Job, do you know about that? He understood. Did you create these things? Did you have the ability to make such variety and change?

And he's just questioning Job all the time. And at the end of that section, Job is, well, he's sobered, isn't he? We're not going to spend time on Job's response here at all.

[20 : 14] Look at that next week and both his responses. So you know the passage in the New Testament where Jesus Christ heals the blind man.

And he asks him, can you see clearly? And he says, no, I see people walking about like trees. And so he's touched again and he's healed properly.

And it's like staged. Well, it seems a little bit like that here. Is that there's a staged revelation here for Job. By this stage, he's sobered. Certainly he's silenced.

He doesn't want to answer God anymore. He knows God is sovereign and he knows God is powerful and he knows God knows about his suffering and he knows what's going on and he appreciates what's going on.

He knows that. But it doesn't yet lead him to worship and repentance. He's just silenced.

[21 : 14] And he's still in confusion and he still doesn't understand suffering and evil in relationship to his faith.

So God moves on to the second revelation of his character and the second challenge about Job. The first challenge was to God's will and to God's knowledge.

You know, I know, Job was saying, you don't know. But the second and maybe the more serious one is Job questioned the justice of God. Ping.

That immediately takes us to so many people today who questioned that God is a just God. He might be a powerful sovereign, but I hate him because he's not just because he's acting unjustly and allowing evil and because he's not fair.

And that was part of Job's complaint. Part of what Job said against God, which Elihu pointed out as we saw last week.

[22 : 15] There's more questions from God here, not quite so many, but it's not just about power, but it's about justice. And because it's about justice, it must therefore, in our understanding of the Bible, also be about mercy.

Because we know, for the scripture tells us that justice and mercy met at the cross and kissed mutually. There's no disengagement between dealing with God.

We can't deal with God's justice without seeing his mercy. And it may be, in terms of the written word, not expressed here clearly, but it is clearly the intent of the passage that we look at here.

And so Job, God in the second place, goes on to answer our question job about this claim he makes.

Look at verse 7 of chapter 40. Would you discredit my justice? Would you condemn me to justify yourself? That's the kernel, that's the very heart of Job's complaint.

[23 : 25] Both that God doesn't know he's doing, and it may be he does know what he's doing, but he's not just in what he is doing. So God answers both these things. And so what he does, he does a couple of things.

And we're nearly, we're coming to a conclusion here. First of all, he speaks and questions Job in verses 7 to 14. Brace yourself like a man.

And basically he says, can you judge all evil? Job, can you? Were you fit and able and powerful enough to judge all the evil that there is?

That's what he's saying in verses 7 to 14. You know, have you an arm like God, he says? Can you thunder your voice? Then adorn yourself with glory and splendor, clothe yourself with honour and majesty.

Unleash the fury of your wrath, justice. Look at every proud man, humble him, bury them, and then he goes on to say, and if you can do all of that God, he says, Job, and you can save yourself from death, then I will myself will admit to you that you're God.

[24 : 29] That is what he's saying here. You know, and what he's saying to all of us is in our own little ordinary lives, as we accuse God boldly and courageously, shaking our fist at him from our throne.

He says, you know, can you righteous anger? And you know, there's lots of righteous anger we have. There's lots of injustice that we sense. Can it bring about universal justice for all?

Can we change this world so it's absolutely just? Can we condemn the right people? Can we free the people that are innocent? Can we see into anyone's heart so that we know, do we even are able to see into our own hearts?

Because the ultimate answer must be, of course, if we are absolutely correct in all of these things, then we can save ourselves. We don't need to die because death is separation from God, isn't it?

It's God's just punishment against us. But if we don't die, if we're not separated, if we can turn against and save ourselves, then we don't need God. God is absolutely right in what he says there.

[25 : 35] Are we immortal? Are we sinless? Job, he says, come off the throne. Come off the throne for a moment and see who I am. And so often isn't that what we might not be so provocative in the way we say it.

But in our lives, by doing what we want, by saying what we want, by accusing God of injustice, we're on the throne. We're saying, I'm the Lord, I'm the sovereign, I'm the king, I'm the God.

When my death comes, I'll just take it and I'll just go six feet under. That's all it'll be anyway. And to what God is saying about justice and about life and about death and about who he is.

Because then he goes on to say, and this is where we finish. And this is the most difficult section. See, that is so far been easy. No problems.

But this is the most difficult section. And there's a lot of debate about what is meant in this last section where you think it's a strange way to end.

[26 : 35] He's really building up so beautifully, isn't he? And then all of a sudden he moves back to the animal kingdom and speaks about Leviathan and Behemoth to these great animals.

And it seems to be that, well, it seems a bit distracted. And it's not the answer we're looking for until we understand what he is saying. Now, you'll maybe notice in the footnote, sometimes when it speaks about Leviathan and Behemoth, it'll say, you know, possibly a hippopotamus, possibly a giant crocodile.

So there's these interpretations of what we have here. But it doesn't seem satisfying enough that God goes back to job after dealing with these massive issues about justice and about life and death.

And then says, crocodile, look at a crocodile, and look at a hippopotamus. Surely you understand now that I'm God. It just doesn't seem that that would have persuaded job to repent and dust and ashes.

You know, it talks about no man being able to tame these beasts. Maybe so, but there's talk of, you know, there's records of Egyptian people taming the crocodile that was in the Nile and things like that.

[27 : 53] To me, it seems clear from scripture here and elsewhere that this is giving us a symbolic picture of a personification in animal terms of evil, of Satan.

It reintroduces Satan into the picture, who's right at the very beginning of the book. And basically in terms of God's justice, he's saying that I am the only one who is powerful enough to defeat the power and the evil and the brutality of Satan and death and evil, as is represented by these two mythical, exaggerated monsters that are given here.

Now, I may be wrong, but to me that seems a powerful, a much more powerful persuasive argument. Can you look with me briefly? We're nearly done.

Isaiah chapter 27. I write things down too quickly sometimes. I hope I've got my reference right.

Isaiah 27. In that day, God says, the Lord will punish with his sword, his fierce, great and powerful sword Leviathan, the gliding serpent.

[29 : 09] Leviathan, the coiling serpent. He will slay the monster of the sea. He's not speaking here about a wild animal. He's talking about the power of the grave and Satan and death and ultimate rescue that he will do.

And then follow with me right to the end of the Bible to Revelation. Revelation chapter 20. And I hope this links it together.

Revelation 20 and verse 2. And then I saw the angel coming down from heaven, having the key of the abyss and holding in his hand a great chain.

He sees the dragon, that ancient serpent who is the devil, or Satan and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the abyss. So this picture of Satan is biblically accurate that he is portrayed as a serpent.

As he is in Genesis chapter 3, as the serpent. And there's links between all of these images and pictures that would allow us to recognize both Leviathan and what we have here as representations of Satan and evil.

[30 : 23] And in many ways, it's a, when you reread it, you might want to reread it in that terms. It's a terrifying picture.

You know? And it's a divine glit. This is God. This is what he wants to see. Remember, go back to the beginning of the sermon. This is what God has chosen to say.

The four chapters that God has chosen to reveal to us. Who he is. And what he says, he reveals to us and says, I know exactly how evil, evil is.

I know how dark it is. I know how powerful it is. I know how wicked it is. And he's saying, don't mess with it. You can't tame evil and death and sin the grave.

You can't pet it. You can't give it to your kids to play with. You see the pictures in the imagery and there's two vital verses which must have spoken into job and in situation.

[31 : 21] The first is in chapter 40 and verse 19 and the links in with the passage we read in Isaiah. He ranks first among the works of God.

Satan, the angel of light. Remember Satan was the morning star. One of the greatest. He ranks first among the works of God yet his maker can approach him with his sword.

That's a very important verse. And he's saying, Luke, you're accusing me job of injustice, but I am the one who my way, the only way has dealt with Satan and evil and death and sin with my sword.

And where was that sword wielded? You know the answer, don't you? It was wielded on the cross. That's where the sword of God was wielded on this powerful Leviathan on the cross.

And then the second important verse is chapter 41 when we have the second picture and it is verse 9 to 11.

[32 : 37] My hope of subduing him is false. The mere sight of him is overpowering. Sorry. Yeah. The first one was the behemoth.

Sorry. Second one. No one is fierce enough to rouse him. Then he says, who then is able to stand against me? Who is a claim against me that I must pay?

Everything under heaven belongs to me. When God is there marking his territory and saying, Luke, Satan and the devil and death and sin and the grave, they are under my sovereign authority.

And he has defeated them the only way that they could be. If we look at the entrance of evil into the world, which is a mystery we recognize, but may have been an inevitable consequence of creation, then we must trust that God's answer to that and its defeat and its ultimate demise and total destruction must be the cross, must be God coming and dealing with evil himself.

That is where his justice is worked out. And of course, therefore, so is his love because it's his love for humanity. It's his love for you and me.

[33 : 55] It's his love for people who are dying and sinful and can't be forgiven and can't stand before God in that day and their own strength that sent him to the cross to be the carpenter who is nailed to the tree and the wood himself as God.

And so God is saying, really, in this chapter with the Leviathan and the behemoth, which are representations of evil, he's saying, Job, you question my justice, but I alone have defeated and can defeat evil and trust me, I have and I will.

It's a remarkable passage. And somehow that must have powerfully spoken of God's mercy and grace to Job also.

And all these pictures of the wild animals, they do fit in very well with Psalm 22, that is a great prophetic Psalm that is triggered by my God, my God, by the view of forsaking me and speaks about the wild boos of abatement that attacked Jesus on the cross.

And this is not speaking about boos or dogs, wild dogs. He's speaking about Satan and its power on the cross. He uses illustrations, he uses pictures.

[35 : 14] Sometimes we just need to lighten up a bit and see that God does use pictures and does use illustrations because it's easier and it's helpful and Jesus loves lots of parables, lots of stories.

And we sometimes think we're too intellectually above all that kind of stuff. And yet that's how God conveyed truth to us. The cross is the central reality of the moral universe, which is why he ends his discourse with his power and justice and defeat of evil in the representation of the behemoth and Leviathan.

This is the only way. Now there's lots we don't understand, isn't there? There's lots in that I don't understand. And there's lots that Job still didn't understand.

But God is saying to Job, trust me. Trust me with the unanswered questions you have. Trust me through your suffering. Trust me in your trouble. Yes, I know there's mystery, but I know everything and I'm in control and I'm sovereign and I'm good and I'm just and I alone have defeated evil.

Please trust me. I love you. I died for you and a hill in Palestine. I love you. And I rise again on the third day to speak to you today that there's nothing more important than listening to the voice of God.

[36 : 41] Nothing more important than understanding this complex and difficult revelation that he gives here in Job. Not for any intellectual, philosophical or religious reason for our salvation that we understand that he says today, don't turn away from me.

If you don't know me as Lord and Savior, accept what I say, invite me into your heart as Lord and Savior. Make me Lord come off the throne that you're standing on that is judging me and let me be on the throne and worship me as Lord because I love you.

He is truly worthy and it's scary preaching in a passage like this. We should have maybe just left it for God to speak for himself, but maybe that God will speak to your heart and your conscience through his word today.

Let's pray briefly. Father God, we ask and pray that you would help us today to understand you, to love you better. Pray for any today who are in church, who maybe are not Christians, who have not given their hearts to the Lord Jesus Christ, who maybe know about you, know maybe theological truth, but who have not come to that place where Job himself came as we will see God willing next week that he repented and understood and worshiped and loved.

Help us in all the difficulties and suffering and struggles that we have to trust you because you're worthy. Amen. THE VIDEO IS coming aqui pour laue, bas chart.