

Job 38:1-40:2

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Date: 18 March 2012

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[0 : 0 0] This quarter of the academic year, we have been making our way sequentially through the book of Job, Job being the first reading and receiving service.

And if ever there was a book in the Bible that fell along the structural lines of a court case, Job is it.

It opens with what technically, in a literary way, we could call a court scene in heaven, where Satan himself appears in the very throne room, charges our levied.

It moves forward and has been carried along all these weeks that we've been together by the testimony of Job, alternating then back and forth between his friends.

Serving like cross-examination in a line of argument. Well, here we come today to the reading in Job 38, to a climactic moment in the book, really.

[1 : 1 6] The first time where God's voice is heard directly since the very opening of Salvo. And from chapter 38, 1, right through chapter 41, we are given to the words of God.

So what are they? It's the closing argument of God, levied in some sense against Job, a transcript of which you and I now have.

In a court of law, there are opening arguments and there are closing arguments. And they differ in form and in function.

They even vary in accordance with rules, where one might do something in the opening, but not in the closing, or vice versa. In an opening argument, an attorney is limited to the evidence, while in a closing argument, he or she may argue not only the evidence, but argue things on the basis of the merits.

The closing argument that one would give in a court of law has a greater degree of latitude than what's put forward at the beginning. Although, from what I've done in a little bit of research, not being at the law school, there are still things to avoid when making a closing argument.

[2 : 5 0] I've read that those who make effective closing arguments stay away from the use of notice. Also, they are careful not to overreach, lest it boomerang against them.

They've been told to never put the jurist in the shoes of your client, thinking that somehow they would therefore act in the way that you would want them to. And above all, don't be stupid enough to say anything that might warrant a realistic objection from the attorney on the other side.

I mean, what a disaster in the closing argument. Not only to have an objection made, but for fear that it might be sustained. Well, you lose all the force and flow of your argument, and it would reflect negatively on the case.

Well, God is underway. 38 through 41. His closing argument.

In the few minutes that we have here tonight, and I hope you have your text open before you look at it, I've been asked to cover what is rightly the first half of that final speech, namely, the content of chapter 38, right through chapter 40 and verse 2.

- [4 : 22] In doing so, I want us to see how God views himself in the matter. Take a look at the final question there that's right in the middle.
- Chapter 40, verse 2, The Lord says to Job, in the midst of his closing argument, Shall a fault finder contend with the Almighty?
- He who argues with God, let him answer it. Now there's a fascinating word here. It is the word contend.
- And it's informative. For in the Hebrew, it can rightly be translated, complain, or one who's going to wrestle at this point.
- It actually can be thought of as something that's done by your adversary. God, in a sense, is saying, Shall a fault finder contend with the Almighty?
- [5 : 21] Shall he wrestle? Shall he complain? Literally, we have this translation available to us through this word, is the complainant.
- Legal terms. God is asking. Shall a fault finder be as a complainant against God?
- Be as one who levies, charges. God, therefore, sees himself in his closing argument as the defense.
- As the innocent one. God views himself as the one against whom a complainant has brought charges.
- What a striking word. And what a pivotal understanding. God, in his closing argument, speaks as attorney for the defense, namely himself.
- [6 : 30] As one who has been falsely accused. As the one who has done nothing wrong. Now, doesn't that turn the book on its head?
- I find it fascinating, especially given how Job sees himself in the book. Take a look at his identical use of this term in his own closing argument.
- Look back. He rose for his final speech and brought it to a stunning conclusion in the quarter of chapter 31. His own closing argument.
- Beginning, I will, at verse 35. I mean, you can almost hear the rhetorical conviction and flair with which he closes against God. Oh, that I had one to hear me.
- Here is my signature. You can almost just see this in court papers. Let the Almighty answer me. That very term, Almighty Job, God turns back on it, doesn't he, in the midst of his own argument.
- [7 : 42] But here is the critical moment. Oh, that I had the indictment written by my adversary. Same term. Literally, by my complainant.
- Job, like God, viewed himself as the innocent party, wrongly accused.
- and if he had his day in court, all charges would be dropped and he would be vindicated as one who had never done anything wrong.
- Job and God in their closing arguments, declaring themselves to be the defendant. And Job's point, of course, is the problem, you might say, as he spoke first.
- His closing argument came before God's. Indeed, we have seen in this perspective this failed flaw. If he hasn't, he'll heal. This is it.
- [8 : 55] And it's not his behavior. It's the perspective with which he views himself and God. In actual fact, God, he is the one who has brought charges against God.
- In actual fact, Job would be God. In actual fact, Job would have God on the dock.
- And that is the fundamental lesson for your name. A fundamental lesson. For the entire book. For it is easy for us to forget that he is God and we are not.

To be reminded tonight that when we have that self-righteous sense of being wrong by him, we don't have the proper end of things.

in truth, all of our fist waving at God due to the circumstances of life in the end of the day is not an issue of his mistreatment of us, but of our misunderstanding of him.

[10 : 21] God who properly remains above us, God as the one against whom no charges against him.

God now, that's a very important lesson to learn when life goes against us. And there will be times and seasons, and perhaps they may be prolonged to beyond days and weeks and months to years or decades, to humbly remember that he is the innocent and omniscient party who rules the universe.

And we, in all of our rightness, really are the ones who are making out the complaint against him.

With that in place, our understanding of God's closing argument convinces us. And it won't take long to show you the first half of it.

Job, the one who thinks he could win his case against God, God in a sense says, well, consider this. And let me just show you his argument, briefly by headers, not by line by line exposition.

[11 : 54] Four couples from the created order that would argue differently than Job would have thought, followed by seven arguments from the animal kingdom that would controvert Job's understanding of the situation.

Together, and by them, God will silence Job. God will demonstrate from created order in the animal kingdom that he, not Job, has been wrongly accused.

And that as such, it's not the complainant, but a defendant, who in the end, is clear of all wrongdoing. Do you see the couplets? Look at the way verse 4 opens.

Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Paired in verse 8 with, for who shut in the sea, the earth and the sea?

Where were you? Oh, free one of all blame. It's an argument based on God's, in a sense, omnipresence.

[13 : 12] I was the one present, not you. Look at the second couplet. It pairs the morning light and the evening darkness. Verse 12, Have you commanded the morning since your days began?

Or in verse 16, Have you entered into the springs of the sea? Now you must realize it will be very dark in the springs of the sea. And walked in the recesses of the deep, the gates of death?

Have you seen the gates of the deep darkness? This pairing of the light and the darkness? Have you commanded these things?

An argument not necessarily about God's omnipresence, but His omnipotence. His power over all things. Even the light and the darkness. The third couple, verse 22, Have you entered into the storehouses of snow?

Or verse 25, Who has cleft a channel for the torrents of rain? Snow and rain. Have you been where they come from? Have you entered there?

[14 : 21] Not in the sense God's omnipresence or His omnipotence, but His omniscience. Do you know what holds all the things of water?

The fourth couple from the created orders. Verse 31, the simple statement, Can you bind the chains of play of this?

Loose the cords of Orion. He calls forth in a sense the stars. And then verse 34, Can you lift up your voice to the clouds? These entities which orbit the world, the hanging stars and the clouds themselves.

Can you do those things? God's ordaining ability. Well, you can imagine that Job by this moment is no longer feeling as if he is the rightful, innocent, fully knowledgeable, potent one who has an understanding of his own situation.

Yes, that is a lesson Job needed to learn. there are things that God will do in your life over the next 20, 30, 40, 50 years that he will give you no answer to.

[15 : 47] His ways will be completely hidden from you. And even then, he is innocent, defended. and wrongfully accused. Oh, the lesson is there.

The four couplets make God's argument foreign, and it's followed by seven arguments from the animal kingdom. I will only list them rather than expound them.

But he turns to a lion in verse 39. to argue that it is God and not Job who is capable of providing for every living thing.

He turns to a mountain goat in 39.1 to show that it is God and not Job who oversees even the reproduction of all the animal kingdom.

[16 : 51] In verse 5, he'll reference a donkey. In verse 9, an ox. In both of them, Job is told, they are given their freedom by God to roam, not by man.

In 13, the ostrich is said to have been given no insight in regard to what's going on in the world. None at all. Neither has the horse been given any rightful fear of entering into battle.

Verse 19, and he closes with the hawk or the eagle or the vulture, depending upon how you would translate it. Who remains out of reach of any and every predator.

It almost is to me an image of the one who dwells under the shadow of the almighty, who is above all God himself, beyond reach, beyond grasp, beyond any, who can rightly dethrone in from the air.

And then God does a fascinating thing. man. He does what every third-year law student is told never to do. He invites an objection from Job in the middle of the morning argument.

[18 : 08] Look at it there. Shall a fault finder contend with the almighty? He who argues with God, let him answer it. to Job answered the Lord and said, Behold, I have a small account.

What shall I have answered you? I lay my hand on my mouth. I have spoken once. I will not answer twice, but I will proceed no further. In other words, he says, no objection, your honor.

To which God commences the second half of the closing hour. And his name is clear.

And what's different for Job? His perspective on who he is, who God is, and what God would require of him.

Think about it. we tend to think when we wrestle with God, we tend to think of ourselves as defendant. And God is the one who has this unsubstantiated writ, complaint, that he's levied against us.

[19 : 34] God is the book of Job will teach us that it's not the case. Job learned a lesson.

May we learn it too. And may it keep us ever in humility looking for him to meet our deepest need, which, if you keep reading, he does by declaring his own son guilty.

Thank you.