

God Speaks of the Complexities of Nature to Humble Job

Chapters 38:37–40:4

Job 38:37 *Who can number the clouds in wisdom? or who can stay the bottles of heaven,*

Who can number the clouds? - The word here rendered *clouds* (שַׁחַקִּיּוֹת *shachaqiyim*) is applied to the clouds as made up of “small particles” - as if they were composed of fine dust, and hence, the word *number* is applied to them, not as meaning that the clouds themselves were innumerable, but that no one could estimate the number of particles which enter into their formation.

In wisdom - By his wisdom. Who has sufficient intelligence to do it?

Or who can stay the bottles of heaven? - Margin, as in Hebrew “cause to lie down.” The clouds are here compared with bottles, as if they held the water in the same manner; compare the notes at Job 26:8.^{1,2}

RAIN is the largest source of fresh water where rivers, lakes, streams, and aquifers are not accessible. All abundance, therefore, especially physical nourishment, comes from the processes that God has established to supply precipitation to the earth. If men are content, full, and blessed, it is because the Lord has furnished consistent natural laws of nature for them to be so.

Job 38:38 *When the dust groweth into hardness, and the clods cleave fast together?*

When the dust groweth into hardness. ‘Aphar (אֶפְרַיִם) here, as often, means “earth,” or “soil,” rather than “dust.” When by the heat of the sun’s rays the ground grows into hardness, and the clods cleave fast together, baked into a compact mass, then is the time when rain is most needed, and when the Almighty in his

¹ Job 26:8 *He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds; and the cloud is not rent under them.*

² *Barnes’ Notes on the Bible, Job 38:37*

³ *Pulpit Commentary, Job 38:38*

⁴ *Matthew Poole’s Commentary, Job 38:39*

⁵ *Ps. 147:9*

mercy commonly sends it. The consideration of inanimate nature here ends, with the result that its mysteries altogether transcend the human intellect, and render speculation on the still deeper mysteries of the moral world wholly vain and futile.³

Job 38:39-40 *Wilt thou hunt the prey for the lion? or fill the appetite of the young lions,*

⁴⁰ *When they couch in their dens, and abide in the covert to lie in wait?*

Shifting from the heavens, the Lord now directs Job’s attention to the creatures of the earth, which are cared for solely by God’s providence. Lions are mentioned, regarded by many as the most regal of nature’s animals, to show that even their needs are provided for. And just as man cannot care for himself without an environment supplied by God, likewise he does not care for or sustain the well-being of any other of earth’s creatures. This is the Lord’s work, and He alone should be praised for it.

Is it by thy care and providence that the lions, who live in desert places, are furnished with necessary provisions? This is justly mentioned as another wonderful work of God.⁴

Job 38:41 *Who provideth for the raven his food? when his young ones cry unto God, they wander for lack of meat.*

It is not man who provides food for creatures such as the raven. *He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry.*⁵ Absolutely nothing in creation depends upon man for its survival unless, by recklessness or sin, man has first sought to hunt it into extinction.

Job 39:1&2 Knowest thou the time when the wild goats of the rock bring forth? or canst thou mark when the hinds do calve? ² Canst thou number the months that they fulfil? or knowest thou the time when they bring forth?

The Lord then asks Job what he knows about the wild goats that live in the high mountains. If Job could speak very little about these majestic creatures, who inhabit the highest regions of the earth, how could he really know a God whose habitation is heaven? If the mountain goat, which makes its home in the highest peaks of the earth, cannot be fully known without great and extensive human effort, how could the God of heaven, whom no man can approach,⁶ be thought to be easily understood?

Job 39:3 They bow themselves, they bring forth their young ones, they cast out their sorrows.

Continuing with the subject of wild goats, the Lord reveals to Job how man has no role whatsoever in helping them bring forth their young. Instead, by God's providence they are born and survive in the harshest of earthly environments. By this the Lord impresses upon Job that unlike domesticated animals, many creatures of the earth do not depend on man whatsoever. They are God's creatures and are abundantly cared for by His providence.

They bow themselves - literally, they curve or bend themselves; that is, they draw their limbs together.

They cast out their sorrows - That is, they cast forth the offspring of their pains, or the young which cause their pains. The idea seems to be, that they do this without any of the care and attention which shepherds are obliged to show to their flocks at such seasons. They do it when God only guards them; when they are in the wilderness or on the rocks far away from the abodes of man. The leading thought in all this seems to be, that

⁶ *I Tim. 6:16 Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.*

⁷ *Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Job 39:3*

⁸ *Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Job 39:4*

⁹ *I Cor. 10:13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*

the tender care of God was over his creatures, in the most perilous and delicate state, and that all this was exercised where man could have no access to them, and could not even observe them.⁷

Job 39:4 Their young ones are in good liking, they grow up with corn; they go forth, and return not unto them.

Though born in harsh and dangerous conditions, the goats' young grow and develop like domesticated animals fed with corn, and when they leave their mothers, God provides for them in other ways. All this speaks to His wisdom, as He has adapted so many of His creations to both survive and thrive in precarious environments.

They go forth, and return not unto them - God guards and preserves them, even when they wander away from their dam, and are left helpless. Many of the young of animals require long attention from man, many are kept for a considerable period by the side of the mother, but the idea here seems to be, that the young of the wild goat and of the fawn are thrown early on the providence of God, and are protected by him alone. The particular care of Providence over these animals seems to be specified because there are no others that are exposed to so many dangers in their early life.⁸

If God provides for the survival and healthy development of young wild goats, could He not also provide the necessary assistance and strength for Job to successfully overcome and gain victory in his trial?⁹ And since He gives young mountain goats the ability to survive and flourish in the severest of habitats, could He not also provide for the tempted the means to escape and gain victory over their temptations? Just as the harsh weather of the Rocky Mountains cannot impede the birth or development of a young calf because of the strength and instincts it is born with, neither will God allow worldly temptations to be greater than men can bear.

Job 39:5–8 *Who hath sent out the wild ass free? or who hath loosed the bands of the wild ass?*

⁶ *Whose house I have made the wilderness, and the barren land his dwellings.*

⁷ *He scorneth the multitude of the city, neither regardeth he the crying of the driver.*

⁸ *The range of the mountains is his pasture, and he searcheth after every green thing.*

Some creatures God has intended to be domesticated, and others, like the wild ass, He has freed from human servitude. This is not to say, though, that these same creatures are beyond His governance. Observe as well that the Lord delights in giving certain animals freedom as much as He enjoys it when other animals should provide companionship and comfort to man. There is beauty in the roles God has designed for all creatures to play. Whether they are purposed for companionship, sustenance, or independence, all is for the glory of God.

Job 39:9–12 *Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee, or abide by thy crib?*

¹⁰ *Canst thou bind the unicorn with his band in the furrow? or will he harrow the valleys after thee?*

¹¹ *Wilt thou trust him, because his strength is great? or wilt thou leave thy labour to him?*

¹² *Wilt thou believe him, that he will bring home thy seed, and gather it into thy barn?*

If God has determined that some animals need not be under human subjection, there is nothing that any can do to reverse this genetic independence. So if any creature has been set free by God, it will prove impossible for men to reverse the natural, free instincts He has imparted.

Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee — Canst thou tame him, and bring him into subjection to thy command? Or, abide by thy crib? — Will he suffer himself to be tied, or confined there all night, and kept for the work of the next day as the oxen are? Surely not. It is much disputed among the learned, whether this reem, which is the Hebrew name of

¹⁰ Benson Commentary, Job 39:9

¹¹ Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Job 39:17

the animal here spoken of, be the rhinoceros, or a certain kind of wild goat, called orix, or a kind of wild bull, which seems most probable, both from the description of it here and elsewhere in Scripture. Schultens inclines to this opinion, thinking it to be the Arabian buffalo of the bull species, but absolutely untamable, and which the Arabians frequently hunt.¹⁰

Job 39:13–18 *Gavest thou the goodly wings unto the peacocks? or wings and feathers unto the ostrich?*

¹⁴ *Which leaveth her eggs in the earth, and warmeth them in dust,*

¹⁵ *And forgetteth that the foot may crush them, or that the wild beast may break them.*

¹⁶ *She is hardened against her young ones, as though they were not her's: her labour is in vain without fear;*

¹⁷ *Because God hath deprived her of wisdom, neither hath he imparted to her understanding.*

¹⁸ *What time she lifteth up herself on high, she scorneth the horse and his rider.*

Though God has deprived some creatures, like the ostrich, of great wisdom, he has provided them the necessary means for their survival. So even though many creatures are endowed with less intelligence, it does not mean that God has not given them other strengths to ensure their continuance.

Because God hath deprived her of wisdom ... - That is, he has not imparted to her the wisdom which has been conferred on other animals. The meaning is, that all this remarkable arrangement, which distinguished the ostrich so much from other animals was to be traced to God. It was not the result of chance; it could not be pretended that it was by a human arrangement, but it was the result of divine appointment. Even in this apparent destitution of wisdom, there were reasons which had led to this appointment, and the care and good providence of God could be seen in the preservation of the animal. Particularly, though apparently so weak, and timid, and unwise, the ostrich had a noble hearing Job 39:18, and when aroused, would scorn the fleetest horse in the pursuit, and show that she was distinguished for properties that were expressive of the goodness of God toward her, and of his care over her.¹¹

Job 39:19–25 Hast thou given the horse strength? hast thou clothed his neck with thunder?

²⁰ Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper? the glory of his nostrils is terrible.

²¹ He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength: he goeth on to meet the armed men.

²² He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword.

²³ The quiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear and the shield.

²⁴ He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage: neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet.

²⁵ He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha; and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting.

Attention is now brought to the horse, with an emphasis on its fearlessness and readiness for battle. Few creatures on earth are as powerful, athletic, and beautiful as the horse. God has given the horse an attractiveness, strength, and fragility that makes it unique beyond any other of His magnificent creatures. No doubt the horse is noble and worthy of great spiritual attention, since the Scriptures reveal that the Lord Jesus will return upon a horse to conquer the earth. *And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.*¹²

Hast thou given the horse strength? - The incidental allusion to the horse in comparison with the ostrich in the previous verse, seems to have suggested this magnificent description of this noble animal - a description which has never been surpassed or equalled.

The horse is an animal so well known, that a

¹² Rev. 19:11

¹³ Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Job 39:19

¹⁴ Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Job 39:25

¹⁵ Matt. 21:6–11 *And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them, ⁷And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon. ⁸And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way. ⁹And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest. ¹⁰And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? ¹¹And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.*

John 12:12–15 On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, ¹³Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord. ¹⁴And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, ¹⁵Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt.

¹⁶ Rev. 6:2

¹⁷ Benson Commentary, Rev. 19:11

particular description of it is here unnecessary. The only thing which is required is an explanation of the phrases used here, and a confirmation of the particular qualities here attributed to the war-horse, for the description here is evidently that of the horse as he appears in war, or as about to plunge into the midst of a battle.¹³

Job is reminded that it is God who has given the horse its strength and the ferociousness to disregard its own well-being and plunge into battle. So confident is the horse in its victory that it laughs before combat. Hence, neither the shouts of captains nor the commotions of soldiers preparing for war do anything to make this glorious creature skittish of the engagement to come.

And he smelleth the battle afar off - That is, he snuffs, as it were, for the slaughter. The reference is to the effect of an approaching army upon a spirited war-horse, as if he perceived the approach by the sense of smelling, and longed to be in the midst of the battle.¹⁴

What a stark contrast there is between Christ entering Jerusalem on a donkey and how He will return in resurrected glory, riding upon a white horse, which symbolizes His assurance of victory!¹⁵ *And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.*¹⁶

Many paid little regard to Christ when he came meek and lowly, riding upon an ass: but what will they say or think, when he comes forth upon his white horse, with the sharp sword of his mouth? The white horse, on which Christ is represented as riding, was intended to denote his justice and holiness, and also that victory and triumph should mark his progress.¹⁷

Job 39:26 Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom, and stretch her wings toward the south?

The Lord now asks if the hawk has gained its extraordinary power of flight through Job's wisdom. When one examines the prominent features of birds like the hawk—their gift of flight as well as the great speeds and distances they fly—you have to wonder if men ever really even consider that God is the Creator of all living things. No man can deeply ponder the gifts and abilities given to God's creatures and not be spellbound by His wisdom, and if men refuse to attribute glory to God, it is only because they have ignored the evidence of Him in creation.

Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom? — So strongly, constantly, unweariedly, and swiftly. Thuanus mentions a hawk which flew from London to Paris in a night; and it was on account of the remarkable swiftness of the hawk that the Egyptians made it their hieroglyphic for the wind;¹⁸

Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom - The appeal here is to the hawk, because it is among the most rapid of the birds in its flight. The particular thing specified is its flying, and it is supposed that there was something special in that which distinguished it from other birds. Whether it was in regard to its speed, to its manner of flying, or to its habits of flying at periodical seasons, may indeed be made a matter of inquiry, but it is clear that the particular thing in this bird which was adapted to draw the attention, and which evinced especially the wisdom of God, was connected with its flight. . . . The falcon, or hawk, is often distinguished for fleetness. One, belonging to a Duke of Cleves, flew out of Westphalia into Prussia in one day; and in the county of Norfolk (England) one was known to make a flight of nearly thirty miles in an hour. A falcon which belonged to Henry IV of France, having escaped from Fontainebleau, was found twenty-four hours after in Malta, the space traversed being not less than one thousand three hundred and fifty miles; being a velocity of about fifty-seven miles an hour, on the supposition that the bird was on the

wing the whole time. It is this remarkable velocity which is here appealed to as a proof of the divine wisdom. God asks Job whether he could have formed these birds for their rapid flight. The wisdom and skill which has done this is evidently far above any that is possessed by man.¹⁹

Job 39:27 Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high?

Another glorious creature, the eagle, is brought to Job's attention, highlighting the Lord's spectacular wisdom in creating birds such as this. Like the mountain goat, the eagle lives in the highest regions of the earth. The Lord no doubt chooses to speak of majestic creatures like these because His own home is high and unobservable by earthly men.

The eagle has always been celebrated for the height to which it ascends. When Ramond had reached the summit of Mount Perdu, the highest of the Pyrenees, he perceived no living creature but an eagle which passed above him, flying with inconceivable rapidity in direct opposition to a furious wind. *Edin. Ency.* "Of all animals, the eagle flies highest; and from thence the ancients have given him the epithet of *the bird of heaven*."²⁰

Job 39:28&29 She dwelleth and abideth on the rock, upon the crag of the rock, and the strong place.

²⁹ From thence she seeketh the prey, and her eyes behold afar off.

Keeping Job's focus on the eagle, the Lord now mentions its astonishing sight.

Her sight is exceeding sharp and strong, so that she is able to look upon the sun with open eyes, and to behold the smallest prey upon the earth or sea, when she is mounted out of our sight; which when she spies, she flies to it with incredible swiftness, even like an arrow out of a bow.²¹

So great is the eagle's eye that scientists claim it can see four to eight times as far as the human eye. It has also been said that an eagle can perceive an ant from a vantage point as far up as a ten-

18 Benson Commentary, Job 39:26

19 Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Job 39:26

20 Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Job 39:27

21 Matthew Poole's Commentary, Job 39:29

story building.²² Not only does the eagle have the power of flight, but God has also blessed it with this extraordinary gift of sight. And like the eagle, God can see so many things that others cannot.

Job 39:30 Her young ones also suck up blood: and where the slain are, there is she.

Because young eagles, like many other baby birds, live in nests high above the earth and have no access to water, God has ensured that the blood of their mothers' prey will aptly care for their needs.

Her young ones also suck up blood,.... As well as herself, being brought up to it by her. The eagle cares not for water, but drinks the blood of her prey; and so her young ones after her, as naturalists report (w). And Aelianus says (x) the same of the hawk, that it eats no seeds, but devours flesh and drinks blood, and nourishes her young ones with the same.

And where the slain are, there is she; where there has been a battle, and carcasses left on the field, the eagles will gather to them. This is particularly true of that kind of eagles called vulture eagles, as Aristotle (y) and Pliny (z) observe; see Matthew 24:28.²³ Now since Job was so ignorant of the nature of these creatures, and incapable of governing and directing them; and what they had of any excellency were of God, and not of him, nor of any man; how unfit must he be to dispute with God, and contend with him about his works of providence?²⁴

Job 40:1&2 Moreover the LORD answered Job, and said,

² Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? he that reproveth God, let him answer it.

Though Job had a reverential fear of God, this passage makes it abundantly clear that he both contended with the Almighty and thought himself able to find fault with God and now must give account of the sin committed. It seems

remarkable that even godly men like Job, ourselves included, can be tempted to find fault with a Creator we are so vastly inferior to. Even though human wisdom is so much lower than the Lord's, there can still be the temptation to question His judgment and quarrel with His ways. Job's sin is not unique, even among god-fearing men, for who has not questioned God's fairness because of the difficult conditions they faced? Few have lived any great length of time on the earth and not been at least tempted to question God's government.

Yet all striving and contending with the Lord is sin, and this is a sin that has been evident in fallen man since the earliest days of creation. *And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.*²⁵ It was this contentious state between God and man that eventually led to the world's destruction. Hence, none should minimize how contention and rebellion, if not repented of, can lead to the Lord's wrath being sent from heaven. The truth is that those who will not cease finding fault with the Lord are sure to one day suffer His judgment. *But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.*²⁶

My Spirit - in contradistinction to the spirit of disobedience which, by the fall, obtained entrance into the soul of man. *Shall not strive with man forever.* To strive *לִּי דִינָא* is to keep down, rule, judge, or strive with a man by moral force. From this passage we learn that the Lord by his Spirit strives with man up to a certain point. In this little negative sentence streams out the bright light of God's free and tender mercy to the apostate race of man. He sends his Spirit to irradiate the darkened mind, to expostulate with the conscience, to prompt and strengthen holy resolve, and to bring back the heart, the confidence, the affection to God. He effects the blessed result of repentance toward God in some, who are thus proved to be born of God. But it is a solemn thought that with others he will not

²² Wolchover, N. (2012, February 24). What if humans had eagle vision? *Live Science*. Retrieved from <https://www.livescience.com/18658-humans-eagle-vision.html>

²³ Matt. 24:28 *For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.*

²⁴ Gill's *Exposition of the Entire Bible*, Job 39:30

²⁵ Gen. 6:3

²⁶ Rom. 2:5

strive perpetually. There is a certain point beyond which he will not go, for sufficient reasons known fully to himself, partly to us. Two of these we are to notice for our instruction: First, he will not touch the free agency of his rational creatures. He can put no force on the volitions of men. An involuntary or compulsory faith, hope, love, obedience, is a contradiction in terms; and anything that could bear the name can have no moral validity whatsoever. Secondly, after giving ample warning, instruction, and invitation, he will, as a just judgment on the unbelieving and the impenitent, withdraw his Spirit and let them alone. The antediluvian world was fast approaching to this point of final perversity and abandonment.²⁷

If men refuse to cease their quarrelling with the Lord, they should not think that He will forever tolerate their sin. No matter how hard they contend with Him, ultimately they will be defeated by Him, since none can continually strive against their Maker and not suffer complete loss of life for it. *There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD.*²⁸

(NIV) *There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the LORD.*

(Berean Study Bible) *There is no wisdom, no understanding, no counsel that can prevail against the LORD.*

(Amplified Bible) *There is no [human] wisdom or understanding Or counsel [that can prevail] against the LORD.*

There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord; i.e. in opposition to him, which can be compared with his, or which can avail against him (comp. Job 5:13; Psalm 33:10, 11; Isaiah 29:14; 1 Corinthians 1:20; 1 Corinthians 3:19).^{29, 30}

²⁷ Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Gen. 6:3

²⁸ Prov. 21:30

²⁹ Job 5:13 *He taketh the wise in their own craftiness: and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong.*

Ps. 33:10&11 *The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect. ¹¹The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.*

Isa. 29:14 *Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.*

1 Cor. 1:20 *Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?*

1 Cor. 3:19 *For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.*

³⁰ Pulpit Commentary, Prov. 21:30

³¹ Job 40:8

³² Isa. 55:11

Job 40:3&4 *Then Job answered the LORD, and said,*

4 *Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.*

Here we see a dramatic change in Job's demeanor, for now, instead of confessing personal self-righteousness, he openly confesses his vileness. No doubt the vileness that Job experienced in his soul was directly related to his understanding of being proud. Such pride was previously willing to condemn God to justify itself. *Wilt thou also disannul my judgment? wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?*³¹ Ultimately, Job's entire view of life changed. Whereas before, he thought God was at fault and himself righteous, now he sees God as righteous and himself as vile. Through God's Spirit, Job came to realize his true condition via the entrance of God's Word. No longer would he lodge false claims against the Lord, accusing Him of injustice. No longer would he complain against God's government, for now he fully realized that it was not God who had sinned against him, but he against God. What he had previously thought was darkness (God) was light, and what he previously had thought was light (himself) was darkness. His perception was completely changed. God's Word had accomplished its purpose, as it always does. *So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.*³²

Through the divinely spoken Word of God, the Lord brings men to repentance, shedding light on their sin and revealing

to them His holiness. God's Word brings sinners to their knees so they might with sincerity repent of them. All human reason, tradition, and experience are insufficient to accomplish God's divine purposes. For His purposes to be fulfilled, it is necessary and essential that His Word be sent, because only the Word of God can accomplish His will in the earth. Ultimately, only the Lord can accomplish His purposes for the people He has called to Himself.

After God had shown Job, by his manifest ignorance of the works of nature, how unable he was to judge of the methods and designs of Providence, he puts a convincing question to him; Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? Now Job began to melt into godly sorrow: when his friends reasoned with him, he did not yield; but the voice of the Lord is powerful. When the Spirit of truth is come, he shall convince. Job yields himself to the grace of God. He owns himself an offender, and has nothing to say to justify himself. He is now sensible that he has sinned; and therefore he calls himself vile. Repentance changes men's opinion of themselves. Job is now convinced of his error. Those who are truly sensible of their own sinfulness and vileness, dare not justify themselves before God.³³

When men are more than willing to close their mouths, it is a sign that the Sword of the Spirit has accomplished its mission. It is this stopping of men's mouths that God desires, bringing men to repentance through His law and Word. *Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.*³⁴

That every mouth may be stopped - This is perhaps, a proverbial expression, Job 5:15; Psalm 107:42.³⁵ It denotes that they would be thoroughly convinced; that the argument would be so conclusive as that they would have nothing to reply; that all objections would be silenced.³⁶

It is only once men's mouths have been stopped through awareness of sin that they are finally willing to subject themselves to God. This admission of guilt also carries with it an admittance of uncleanness. *Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.* God will forgive only those who instead of denying sin gain the humility necessary to confess it. *I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.*³⁷ Therefore, men must acknowledge personal sin against God if they desire reconciliation with Him.

The Scriptures also state that only those who possess a broken and contrite spirit will be allowed to share eternity with the Lord. For a man to enter heaven, he must first gain a humble and contrite spirit. *For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.*³⁸ In this passage God reveals who will (and ultimately who will not) be allowed to dwell with Him on His holy hill—those who manifest a broken and contrite spirit because of an awareness of their previous pride and self-righteousness. Hence, only those who realize that they have sinned against the Lord through pride and self-righteousness and then ask forgiveness for it will be allowed to live with Him.

Repentance is critical, Job would learn, as without it there can be no chance of reconciliation with God. It is the first thing He demands of men for their salvation, and men would be wise to implement it in their lives. *From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*³⁹

³³ *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary, Job 40:1-5*

³⁴ *Rom. 3:19*

³⁵ *Job 5:15 But he saveth the poor from the sword, from their mouth, and from the hand of the mighty. Ps. 107:42 The righteous shall see it, and rejoice: and all iniquity shall stop her mouth.*

³⁶ *Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Rom. 3:19*

³⁷ *Ps. 32:5*

³⁸ *Isa. 57:15*

³⁹ *Matt. 4:17*