

God Demands Job Answer Him Concerning Creation

Job Chapter 38:1–36

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

(NIV) *Then the LORD spoke to Job out of the storm. He said:*

THIS magnificent display of God's power was intimidating, and His manifestation would be worthy of nothing less. *The voice of the LORD is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth: the LORD is upon many waters* (Ps. 29:3). The Lord's creation both revealed and hid His presence, and Job could not doubt the seriousness that the change in climate was impressing upon him. The atmosphere reflected the severity of Job's crime, for God spoke not in a still, small voice¹ but out of a strong, forceful, and threatening whirlwind. Nature showed its agreement with the Lord, and He directed it to ready Job's heart for His upcoming spiritual reproof.

(Benson Commentary, Job 38:1) *Then the Lord answered Job*—No sooner had Elihu uttered the words last mentioned, but there was a sensible token of the presence of that dreadful majesty of God among them, spoken of Job 38:22;² and Jehovah began to debate the matter with Job, as he had desired; *out of the whirlwind*—Out of a dark and thick cloud, from which he sent a terrible and tempestuous wind, as the harbinger of his presence.

Job 38:2 Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?

(Benson Commentary, Job 38:2) *Who is this, &c.*—What and where is he that presumes to talk at this rate? *That darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?*—Words proceeding from ignorance, mistake, and want of consideration. Who is this that disparages my counsels, and darkens the wisdom of my dispensations with his ignorant discourses about them? This language becomes not a creature, much less a professor of the true religion. The person here intended is not Elihu, who spoke last, but Job, who had spoken most, as is manifest from the former verse, in which it is said, *The Lord answered Job*; and from Job 42:3,³ where Job takes the following reproof to himself, as also from the following discourse, wherein God convinces Job by divers of the same kind of arguments which Elihu had used against him. With a single question God shows the absolute emptiness of human abilities, strikes Job to the heart, and puts an end to the dispute.

When men speak, they either reveal the Lord's true nature and character to others or they distort His image. If not led by the Holy Spirit, it is impossible to speak of the Lord without darkening Whom God really is. Hence, whenever human reason, tradition, or experience replaces divine revelation, confusion will increase and

1 I Kgs. 19:11–13 *And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake:*¹² *And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.*¹³ *And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?*

2 Job 38:22 *Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow? or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail,*

3 Job 42:3 *Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.*

the understanding of God's true character will be tarnished. Instead of bringing light to the situation, Job's lack of true spirituality only darkened it more. Because Job spoke of things beyond his spiritual ability to understand, all he really did was darken the counsel of the very one he sought to please.

Job 38:3 Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me.

Whenever men sin against God, they will be required to gird up their loins and ultimately stand before Him, needing to give a full account for their actions.

(Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Job 38:3) Gird up now thy loins like a man— . . . The idea here is, "Make thyself as strong and vigorous as possible; be prepared to put forth the highest effort." God was about to put him to a task which would require all his ability—that of explaining the facts which were constantly occurring in the universe.

Job was now required to stand before the Lord and give a full account of his previous words and thoughts. The Lord had required this of him, and it would prove impossible for him to avoid it.

(Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary, Job 38:1–3) Our darkening the counsels of God's wisdom with our folly, is a great provocation to God.

Job 38:4 Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding.

Whenever men speak of God, there is some inference that they have been with God. To this the Lord asks Job if he had been with Him in the beginning. Since Job had presumed to know so much of the Lord, could he recall the celestial and awe-inspiring events of creation?

Job 38:5 Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it?

It is one thing for a man to lay out the plans for a small earthly abode; it is quite another thing to be the Architect and Creator of heaven and earth.

(Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Job 38:5) The earth is represented as a building, the plan of which was laid out beforehand, and which was then made according to the sketch of the architect. It is not, therefore, the work of chance or fate. It is laid out and constructed according to a wise plan, and in a method evincing infinite skill.

Job 38:6 Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof;

Since all buildings and structures must have a foundation to sit upon, what, then, is the earth's? If Job could not answer this question concerning what the earth sat upon and where it had gained its beginnings, then how could he be so confident in speaking of its Creator?

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

Whenever a great work is completed, it is reason for joy and celebration. The earth's creation was no different. The expression *shouted for joy* describes the angels' response to a moment of unequaled beauty in the distant past. The time referred to is the end of creation, for the account relates to the formation of the earth and not that of the stars.

Job 38:8 Or who shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth, as if it had issued out of the womb?

We know that large aquifers in the earth contain huge volumes of water and that

during the flood⁴ these aquifers burst open and filled the earth. God asks Job, “Who set the bounds of these watery eruptions so that they did not completely immerse the land above?” The image used to describe this early creation event is that of a child coming out of his mother’s womb. The earth is God’s creation, and He looks upon it with both affection and admiration. It is His work, it has sprung forth from Him, and therefore it is proper for Him to glory in it.

Job 38:9 When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddlingband for it,

Continuing to liken the earth to a child, the Lord describes the clouds as its swaddling blanket.

(Geneva Study Bible, Job 38:9) When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a {g} swaddlingband for it,

(g) As though the great sea was but as a little baby in the hands of God to turn to and fro.

Job 38:10 And brake up for it my decreed place, and set bars and doors,

When we imagine the vast power of the seas in the early days of creation, when darkness lay upon the waters of the deep, we see why God asked Job if he knew Who put bounds upon them. Who is this God who can set even boundaries on the vast oceans of water that encompass the earth? What heavenly and spiritual creature is so great that He could create a door strong enough to hold back the mighty seas? Nations spend large amounts of financial resources on creating levees, but if a storm is sufficiently strong, it will easily and with little effort overcome anything that man has built. Yet God in his intrinsic spiritual

ability is able to separate the dry land from the sea so that each might fulfill its distinct purpose for man.

Job 38:11 And said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed?

Like a general, the Lord commanded that the mighty and often ferocious waves halt and proceed no farther than the shoreline. Regardless of how robust and proud the oceans may be, they cannot proceed beyond the boundaries the Lord has set for them. Not even the mighty waters of the earth can progress or extend themselves beyond the limits that divine will has set.

(Barnes’ Notes on the Bible, Job 38:11) *And here shall they proud waves be stayed*—Margin, as in Hebrew, “the pride of thy waves.” A beautiful image. The waves seem to advance in pride and self-confidence, as if nothing could stay them. They come as if exulting in the assurance that they will sweep everything away. In a moment they are arrested and broken, and they spread out humbly and harmlessly on the beach. God fixes the limit or boundary which they are not to pass, and they lie prostrate at his feet.

Job 38:12 Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days; and caused the dayspring to know his place;

Each and every morning that has ever transpired upon the earth mimics the early days of creation, when the Lord commanded the light to shine out of the darkness. None are more removed from God than those who no longer acknowledge or believe in His role in creation, who foolishly believe that something could come out of nothing yet cannot even explain what this nothing consisted of in the first place.

⁴ Gen. 7:11 In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.

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

Here God reveals how His light exposes wickedness on the earth and causes it to scatter. Where true light exists and whenever the Lord chooses to send it, darkness is neutralized and cannot carry out its evil intentions.

(Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Job 38:13) *That the wicked might be shaken out of it*—Out of the earth; that is, by the light which suddenly shines upon them. The sense is, that the wicked perform their deeds in the darkness of the night, and that in the morning light they flee away. The effect of the light coming upon them is to disturb their plans, to fill them with alarm, and to cause them to flee. The idea is highly poetic. The wicked are engaged in various acts of iniquity under cover of the night. Robbers, thieves, and adulterers, go forth to their deeds of darkness as though no one saw them. The light of the morning steals suddenly upon them, and they flee before it under the apprehension of being detected. "The dawn," says Herder, "is represented as a watchman, a messenger of the Prince of heaven, sent to chase away the bands of robbers." It may illustrate this to observe that it is still the custom of the Arabs to go on plundering excursions before the dawn. When on their way this faithful watchman, the aurora, goes out to spread light about them, to intimidate them, and to disperse them; compare the notes at Job 24:13–17.⁵

Job 38:14 *It is turned as clay to the seal; and they stand as a garment.*

When we observe pictures of the earth from space, we realize the great distinc-

tion between where the sun shines and where it does not. When light hits the earth, it is then seemingly transformed as clay would be when pressed upon by a seal. Hence, whereas previously the earth in darkness seems flat and without any shape or form, upon exposure to light the beauty, shape, and contour of it are both vividly and wonderfully exposed.

Job 38:15 *And from the wicked their light is withholden, and the high arm shall be broken.*

(Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary, Job 38:15) *their light*—by which they work; namely, darkness, which is their day (Job 24:17⁶), is extinguished by daylight.

high—Rather, "The arm uplifted" for murder or other crime is broken; it falls down suddenly, powerless, through their fear of light.

The Lord again draws a picture of how His light affects wicked men. Light is as dangerous to the sinner's plans, schemes, and deeds as darkness is to the innocent.

Job 38:16–17 *Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? or hast thou walked in the search of the depth?*

¹⁷ *Have the gates of death been opened unto thee? or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death?*

Just as men are ignorant of the mysteries of the deep and the great vents and springs that lie under the oceans and seas of the world, so are they equally ignorant as to what transpires at death. This door is locked, and none aside from God really knows what lies on the other side.

⁵ Job 24:13–17 *They are of those that rebel against the light; they know not the ways thereof, nor abide in the paths thereof.* ¹⁴*The murderer rising with the light killeth the poor and needy, and in the night is as a thief.* ¹⁵*The eye also of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight, saying, No eye shall see me: and disguiseth his face.* ¹⁶*In the dark they dig through houses, which they had marked for themselves in the daytime: they know not the light.* ¹⁷*For the morning is to them even as the shadow of death: if one know them, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death.*

⁶ Job 24:17 *For the morning is to them even as the shadow of death: if one know them, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death.*

(Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary, Job 38:17) Man during life does not even “see” the gates of the realm of the dead (“death,” Job 10:21);⁷ much less are they “opened” to him. But those are “naked before God” (Job 26:6).⁸

The Lord asks Job these questions so that he might become more fully aware of his spiritual ignorance. In his previous responses, Job had manifested an air of religious arrogance, and the Lord now sought to remove this ungodly and ultimately unhealthy pride from him.

Job 38:18 *Hast thou perceived the breadth of the earth? declare if thou knowest it all.*

Focusing on the size and breadth of the earth, the Lord asks Job if he can truly comprehend the world he was born into.

(Matthew Henry’s Concise Commentary, Job 38:18) It is presumptuous for us, who perceive not the breadth of the earth, to dive into the depth of God’s counsels.

We can never truly know the reasons for what God does, or for what He divinely allows to be done. This wisdom is far beyond man, and his lack of understanding should actually lead him to become more subject to divine rule—simply because if man cannot properly understand the Lord’s works, he should be wise enough to refrain from questioning His ways and methods with ruling man, as this hidden wisdom is far more mysterious, deep, and intricate than any of God’s observable creative works.

Job 38:19 *Where is the way where light dwelleth? and as for darkness, where is the place thereof,*

In Job’s day and according to Job’s understanding—or lack of it, rather—the true

origin of light and darkness and where they originated from was virtually unknown, though each day upon the earth seemingly rotated, when also darkness and light took turns replacing the other.

Job 38:20 *That thou shouldest take it to the bound thereof, and that thou shouldest know the paths to the house thereof?*

(Barnes’ Notes on the Bible, Job 38:20) The sense seems to be this: God asks Job whether he was so well acquainted with the sources of light, and the place where it dwelt, that he could take it under his guidance and reconduct it to its place of abode.

And that thou shouldest know the paths to the house thereof?—The same idea is repeated here. Light has a home; a place of abode. It was far distant—in some region unknown to man. Did Job know the way in which it came, and the place where it dwelt so well, that he could conduct it back again to its own dwelling?

Job 38:21 *Knowest thou it, because thou wast then born? or because the number of thy days is great?*

The Lord knew Job could never answer His questions, so now He addressed how much pride must exist in him to assume he had learned so much during his extremely brief life on the earth. Using irony and a bit of mockery, God intended to reveal to Job his unrivaled foolishness. Hence, though Job was only a creature of God and had walked the earth but for just a short time, still he felt fully qualified enough to question the Lord’s judgment in his life. In truth Job knew absolutely nothing concerning creation and the events that surrounded it, and yet because of conceit, he felt himself more than fully qualified to question God’s dealings in his life.

⁷ Job 10:21 *Before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death;*

⁸ Job 26:6 *Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering.*

I Repent in Dust and Ashes

Job 38:22–23 *Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow? or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail,*

23 *Which I have reserved against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war?*

God likens the formation of both snow and hail as a treasure.

(*Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, Job 38:23) *Which I have reserved*—As if they were carefully treasured up to be brought forth as they shall be needed. The idea is, that they were entirely under the direction of God.

The time of trouble—Herder “the time of need.” The meaning probably is, that he had kept them in reserve for the time when he wished to bring calamity on his enemies, or

that he made use of them to punish his foes; compare the notes at Job 36:31–33.⁹

Against the day of battle and war—Hailstones were employed by God sometimes to overwhelm his foes, and were sent against them in time of battle; see Joshua 10:11; Exodus 9:22–26; Psalm 18:12–13;¹⁰ compare the notes at Isaiah 29:6.¹¹

Great battles have often been determined by freezing cold, great storms, or extreme heat, all of which the Lord states He frequently employs to stop the plans of evil men.¹²

Job 38:24 *By what way is the light parted, which scattereth the east wind upon the earth?*

⁹ Job 36:31–33 *For by them judgeth he the people; he giveth meat in abundance.* ³²*With clouds he covereth the light; and commandeth it not to shine by the cloud that cometh betwixt.* ³³*The noise thereof sheweth concerning it, the cattle also concerning the vapour.*

¹⁰ Josh. 10:11 *And it came to pass, as they fled from before Israel, and were in the going down to Bethhoron, that the LORD cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah, and they died: they were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword.*

Exod. 9:22–26 *And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch forth thine hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, upon man, and upon beast, and upon every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt.* ²³*And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven: and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the LORD rained hail upon the land of Egypt.* ²⁴*So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation.* ²⁵*And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and beast; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field.* ²⁶*Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail.*

Ps. 18:12–13 *At the brightness that was before him his thick clouds passed, hail stones and coals of fire.* ¹³*The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice; hail stones and coals of fire.*

¹¹ Isa. 29:6 *Thou shalt be visited of the LORD of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire.*

¹² **The destruction of the Spanish Armada:** Destroyed by Atlantic storms while battling to take over England (1588).

Washington's retreat at the Battle of Long Island: Successful evacuation of nine thousand men with their supplies and cannons under the cover of torrential rains and dense fog that kept the British from detecting their movements (1776).

Napoleon's invasion of Russia: Decimation of Napoleon's troops from 700,000 to 27,000 due to the cold winter and lack of food and supplies caused by the weather (1812).

Hitler's invasion of Russia: German troops battled the cold and found it difficult even to retreat from Moscow because of the weather, with many survivors losing fingers, toes, noses, and eyelids (1941) (*History Collection*, “6 Times the Weather Has Changed War History,” by Michelle Powell-Smith).

Kublai Khan's attempted conquest of Japan: Kahn's fleets were destroyed by massive typhoons, twice, saving Japan from being conquered (1274, 1281) (*The Guardian*: “How a Typhoon Sank Kublai Khan,” by David Hambling).

Waterloo: Torrential rains, mist, and fog contributed to Napoleon's final defeat after twelve years of war (1815) (*The Causes for the Loss of the Battle of Waterloo*, by Solomon Guedalia Rosenbaum).

D-Day: Storms made confident German generals leave their coastal posts, believing the terrible weather likely to continue for many more days and keep the Allies from any conceivable attack (*History-Extra*: “D-Day: How did a weather forecast change the fate of the war?”).

(*Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, Job 38:23) is . . . parted—parts, so as to diffuse itself over the whole earth, though seeming to come from one point. Light travels from the sun to the earth, ninety millions of miles, in eight minutes.

which scattereth—rather, “And by what way the east wind (personified) spreads (scattereth) itself.” The light and east wind are associated together, as both come from one quarter, and often arise together (Jon 4:8).¹³

Job 38:25–28 Who hath divided a water-course for the overflowing of waters, or a way for the lightning of thunder;

²⁶ **To cause it to rain on the earth, where no man is; on the wilderness, wherein there is no man;**

²⁷ **To satisfy the desolate and waste ground; and to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth?**

²⁸ **Hath the rain a father? or who hath begotten the drops of dew?**

Progressing to rain and how it brings water to dry places upon the earth, even where men do not live, the Lord asks Job if rain has a father, again revealing that the Lord likens creation to His own child. Ultimately, the Lord holds an endearing affection for creation and most notably the earth and the wonderful processes that He has established to maintain her fruitfulness and abundance.

Job 38:29 Out of whose womb came the ice? and the hoary frost of heaven, who hath gendered it?

(*Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, Job 38:29) *Out of whose womb came the ice?*—That is, who has caused or produced it? The idea is, that it was not by any human agency, or in any known way by which living beings were propagated.

¹³ *Jnh. 4:8 And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live.*

¹⁴ *Job 37:10 By the breath of God frost is given: and the breadth of the waters is straitened.*

¹⁵ *Job 9:9 Which maketh Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and the chambers of the south.*

And the hoary frost of heaven—Which seems to fall from heaven. The sense is, that it is caused wholly by God; see the notes at Job 37:10.¹⁴

Job 38:30 The waters are hid as with a stone, and the face of the deep is frozen.

Not only did God create water, but He also designed it so that in low temperatures it would change its form to become as hard as stone. This transformation of water from liquid to a solid is directly attributed to the wisdom of God.

(*Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, Job 38:30) The formation of ice is thus appealed to as a proof of the wisdom of God, and as a thing which Job could not explain. No man could produce this effect; nor could Job explain how it was done.

Job 38:31 Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion?

Referring to the Pleiades (also spoken about in Job 9:9),¹⁵ which usher in the spring, and Orion, which foretells of winter, the Lord asks Job if he can bind either of them. Men have no power either to contain or restrain the courses of the stars above. If men do not have the power to prevent the stars of heaven from appearing at their respective times, how could they ever stop God's will from being accomplished on the earth?

Job 38:32 Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season? or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons?

The Lord now asks Job if he can make the stars and constellations appear in their respective seasons. By providing specific names to the stars, the Lord reveals how

acutely connected He is to the landscape of heaven.¹⁶

*(Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Job 38:32) He calleth them all by names—*This idea is also taken from a military leader, who would know the names of the individuals that composed his army. In smaller divisions of an army, this could of course be done; but the idea is, that God is intimately acquainted with all the hosts of stars; that though their numbers appear to us so great, yet he is acquainted with each one individually, and has that knowledge of it which we have of a person or object which we recognize by a name. It is said of Cyrus, that he was acquainted by name with every individual that composed his vast army.

Job 38:33 Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth?

The heavens exhibit a dominion over the earth; they affect things like the ocean's tides and a great many seasonal weather patterns. By this truth Elihu hopes to impress upon Job that heaven rules the earth, and not the earth heaven.

Job 38:34 Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, that abundance of waters may cover thee?

(Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible, Job 38:34) Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, that abundance of waters may cover thee? Thy gardens, fields, and farms; canst thou, in a magisterial way, call to and demand of the clouds to let down rain in large quantities, sufficient to water them and make them fruitful? no, thou canst not: thou mayest cry and call as long as thou wilt, not a cloud will

stir, nor a drop of water be let down; rain is to be had in a suppliant way, through the prayer of faith, as by Elijah, but not in a dictatorial authoritative way: the clouds and rain are only at the disposal of the Lord; ask of him, and he will give them; but they are not to be commanded, Zechariah 10:1 [*Ask ye of the LORD rain in the time of the latter rain; so the LORD shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field.*]; see Amos 5:8.¹⁷

Job 38:35 Canst thou send lightnings, that they may go and say unto thee, Here we are?

If Job cannot control the clouds and the manner in which they bring forth rain, is he in any better position to send lightning upon the earth?

Job 38:36 Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts? or who hath given understanding to the heart?

The Lord now asks Job, Who gives wisdom and understanding to man? Who has put wisdom into him, and given understanding to his heart? What also is as beautiful and mysterious as the Spirit of God imparting wisdom into the heart of the soul of one blind to God, and the vast though invisible spiritual world around him? *But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding* (Job 32:8). It is the Lord, Who illuminates the heart, causes understanding to flow into it, and divinely separates man from all the other creatures in the earth. It is He, and none other, Who has put wisdom into the inward parts of man and *hath given understanding to the heart.*

¹⁶ See *The Witness of the Stars* by E. W. Bullinger

¹⁷ Amos 5:8 *Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is his name:*