

A Guide To The Reader

Pastor recommends that to obtain maximum benefit from his comments you read in full from the Bible every reference whenever one appears. Otherwise the reading of the comments is simply a skimming over the surface. They are rather designed to make you stop and meditate and even look up further references as the Holy Spirit guides you. Do pray before you read that the Holy Spirit will be your Tutor and that the time you spend will be time spent with Him.

Job 40

40.1-2. The Lord's speech to Job began at 38.3 and from 38.4 the Lord had been facing Job with a series of questions to which he could not reply. At this point the Lord pauses with the question, "Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? He that reproveth God, let him answer it". To take issue with the Lord's dealings with us is, by implication, to instruct Him. It is to declare that some alternative way would have been better. For this we must answer, and it would be better to do so now than at judgment day. A believer may confess his sins and be covered by the blood of the Saviour, using the words of verses 3-4 perhaps. The unbeliever will answer for these things at that judgment day.

40.3-4. "Vile" means as light as dust; as defiled as dust; and implies the returning of our mortal frames to the dust, "out of it (the ground) wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Genesis 3.19). Job humbles himself to the ground. He has no answer except to declare that he has none.

40.5. "Once...yea twice" is another way of saying a number of times and that the speaker cannot remember how many and is approximating. God does not approximate. His "recollections" are exact. Elihu used the expression in 33.14. Job means that he has been out of order, he does not know how many times, for his words were a mixture of genuine faith and some unbelief. Perhaps 9.21-24 is his worst reaction to his sufferings. He feels that whatever he may say in the presence of God now will only incriminate him further so wisdom bids him say nothing more.

40.6-7. The whirlwind was last mentioned in 38.1. but it would appear that it had not ceased. Of God, it is written (Psalm 50.3), "and it shall be very tempestuous round about him". Such a storm speaks of such an unsettling of normality as to be awesome, disturbing, frightening and accompanied by the inability to pursue a normal life. It fills the whole horizon and demands attention.

"Gird up thy loins like a man." When the Lord commands that which we cannot do by nature or are unable to do because we are afraid, He simultaneously imparts that strength. For example, we read in Ezekiel 1.28 - 2.2, "And when I saw it (the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD), I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake. And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee. And the spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me." When the gospel is preached to the dead, the Lord awakens those whom He will save. He is still looking for an answer from Job, which he gives at 42.1-6. We see that the Lord is not looking for a mere acquiescence, as if He were browbeating Job, but a "best state" response in which Job in full exercise of his heightened senses will nevertheless acknowledge that he is but dust.

40.8. Here we see God at His most formidable. He is not a God to be trifled with. To “disannul” is to render void, to set at nought. “For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it?” (Isaiah 14.27). If we are discontented with our lot then we are effectively disannulling the Lord’s provision for our life. And so it is with every discontentment. Similarly we are effectively declaring that our way is better than His and justifying ourselves.

40.9. Here the Lord resumes His series of questions to add further considerations to bring Job to understand fully that the Lord’s ways are to be accepted unconditionally, even by a sinner saved by grace and thus “perfect”. “Hast thou an arm like God?” Caryl gives four important conclusions for a believer concerning the strength of God’s arm. First, “if the Lord hath such a mighty arm, then let us take heed we do not provoke the Lord to turn his arm against us”. Secondly, “If the Lord have such an arm, Then let us labour to get and engage the arm of the Lord for our help”. Thirdly, “If God hath such a mighty arm, Then let us trust him”. Fourthly, “If the Lord hath such an arm, such power, This should encourage us to the duty of prayer”. A discharge of great light causes thunder. God’s voice brings the light of gospel life and also the light of clear justice in judgment.

40.10-14. Has Job the intrinsic attributes which permit him to arise in the full glory and greatness of unlimited power? Has he the beauty from within himself to match? Clearly the Lord is declaring that He has the attributes of majesty, excellence, glory and beauty, But Job? No, of course not. Can Job exercise power and justice in a righteous anger to bring low all who are proud? Can he distinguish infallibly who is proud, the nature of their pride and act accordingly? “The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished” (2 Peter 2.9). We read of wicked Haman (Esther 7.8), “As the word went out of the king’s mouth, they covered Haman’s face”. Job himself used the expression, “he covereth the faces of the judges” in 9.24. In the former case no one would ever see Haman’s evil face again until he is on the gallows. In the latter, the Lord renders the judges impotent and incompetent. Whether en masse (together) or one by one (in secret) Job cannot achieve this discriminating and powerful task.

If Job could, so to speak, tick all the boxes (though these exercises of power are only representative of many others) God would admit Job’s ability to save himself. In fact, no man can save himself. Of the Saviour (Matthew 27.40) they said, “Save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross”. As Man, bearing His people’s sin though Himself without sin, He would not save Himself and no other man can himself. “None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him...that he should still live for ever, and not see corruption” (Psalm 49.7.9).

40.15. In the Hebrew, Behemoth is plural and in that language a plural is used sometimes to denote excellence, as we might say, “a beast of beasts” when we mean the most outstanding of beasts. He is, in fact, described as “chief of the ways of God” (40.19); “he eateth grass as an ox” and poses no threat to other creatures to prey on them. One commentator (Henry Morris) considers both the behemoth and leviathan to be dinosaurs before they became extinct as neither of these creatures, he says, entirely fits the description of an elephant or hippopotamus in the one case, or whale or crocodile in the other. The most generally accepted view is that the elephant and the whale are meant here.

Behemoth was made, on the sixth day, with man. It is a humbling reminder to Job to be reminded that, though the beasts of the field were created for man to have dominion over them, the fall has to some extent nullified that dominion and for all Job's knowledge he is subject, as is behemoth, to their mutual Creator. Though at the fall, the Lord ordained that many creatures should become creatures of prey, the Lord did not so ordain it for the elephant. Though wild, he takes the same nourishment as cattle.

40.16. Yet, he has prodigious strength. The "navel" comes to mean the centre of anything, as we might use the expression "hub," and "loins" refers not to the generative power specifically but power generally. Peter uses the picture language (1 Peter 1.13) "gird up the loins of your mind," meaning to use intellectual power to reflect on the things of God.

40.17-18. The tail of an elephant is comparatively small for such a large beast. Probably the word refers to his trunk, and the stones to his generative parts. When the Lord describes his bones He uses metals, though they are inanimate, to describe their weight and, especially, their weight-bearing properties.

40.19. "He is the chief of the ways of God." It is written, "one star differeth from another star in glory" (1 Corinthians 15.41). Among the beasts of the field God has differentiated their status. Though the lion is the king of beasts, he is a killer and does not have the highest accolade. Even as David who said, "God said unto me, Thou shalt not build an house for my name, because thou hast been a man of war, and hast shed blood" (1 Chronicles 28.3). The Lord declares His creatorship over such a beast and that He too can bring him to dust again. More than any other creature he displays strength and declares the strength of Him who is his Creator. Strength or size of creation, creature and universe is no barrier to the Lord's omnipotence.

40.20. The picture of the beasts of the field playing emphasizes that the elephant poses no threat as he is an herbivore. He does not have to take thought for his food, for our heavenly Father feedeth him.

40.21-22. As the Lord "rests in his love" (Zephaniah 3.17) so Behemoth represents not only the Lord's strength but also His delight in rest, not out of sheer necessity, but because rest also is an attribute of the Lord's eternal being, else He could not display it nor create it. "God...rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made" (Genesis 2.2-3).

40.23-24. Behemoth fears none and drinks at leisure. If he needed to he could drain the resources of a river. The very sight of it galvanises his thirst. Nothing can restrain him. He powers his way out of any traps.