

Then the LORD spoke to Job out of the storm. He said:

- ² “Who is this that obscures my plans
with words without knowledge?
³ Brace yourself like a man;
I will question you,
and you shall answer me.
⁴ “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation?
Tell me, if you understand.
⁵ Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know!
Who stretched a measuring line across it?
⁶ On what were its footings set,
or who laid its cornerstone—
⁷ while the morning stars sang together
and all the angels^[a] shouted for joy?
⁸ “Who shut up the sea behind doors
when it burst forth from the womb,
⁹ when I made the clouds its garment
and wrapped it in thick darkness,
¹⁰ when I fixed limits for it
and set its doors and bars in place,
¹¹ when I said, ‘This far you may come and no farther;
here is where your proud waves halt’? (Job 38:1-11 NIV2011)

Who Am I?

How did he end up like this? Why? Life was going well. He was financially stable, a good family, and good health. Life was going really well. Then he heard the news. Foreign people came and stole all of his livestock and killed all his employees. Fire from heaven falls—what some would claim a freak accident—and burns up 7000 head of sheep while killing all the employees watching them. Economically he is ruined. He’s never going to financially recover from this.

But at least he still has his family. He has sons and daughters for whom he dearly loves, prays, and cares. A mighty wind comes out of nowhere and destroys the house they were all at. No survivors but one person who had the terrible job of sharing the news.

At least he had his health. We understand that. As long as I can still get up and do what needs to be done, you’ll be fine. Then painful sores literally cover him from head to toe. No way to get comfortable. Day and night, every way that he moves, whether sitting, laying down, or standing had to be painful. He looks as bad as he feels—his friends hardly recognize him. He can’t take his mind off of things with work. He can’t fix the situation. All he can do is sit in a pile of ashes and think. How did I end up like this? Why did this happen? Who am I now that everything is taken away? Yet, through it all, Job says: **“The Lord gives and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised”** (Job 1:21).

At the same time, it's not like Job has a big smile on his face acting like it's not a big deal. Read through the book of Job and you see a man who struggles. He has some people try to help him. When she watches her husband lose even his health Job's wife had enough. Take away their money, they can recover. Take away their kids, at least they have each other. But then she watches the health of the man she loves deteriorate; that's the last straw. She tells Job, "Curse God and die!" We've heard that before: he turns his back on God because God let this happen, "I just can't believe in him anymore!"

Job's three friends try to help too. At first they don't know what to do; what could they say? But after a while they try. They assure Job, good things happen to people who do good things! Maybe, Job, you need to do some good things to get back onto God's good side. Bad things happen to bad people. Job must have done something that led to this. Even when Job pleads his innocence and defends himself, in sweeps Elihu who reminds Job: "God is fair and just! Admit you must have done something terrible!"

But even before this all happens, God himself said of Job: "**There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil**" (Job 2:3). For all intents and purposes, Job is a good guy! So what is going on here? Good things are supposed to happen to good people. Bad things are supposed to happen to bad people. Even after suffering bad things, if you are good throughout it all, you should then receive good things after a while!

So, why was this all happening? There had to be a reason! That's what Job's wife and friends are trying to figure out. It's what we do when bad things happen in our world, with our friends, our family, with ourselves. We sit with them. We see or hear what happened. Your heart goes out to them. You sometimes even feel a little sick as you try and stomach what you witness. We want to try and fix it. We feel we should say something. So we ask: "What are you going to do? What is going to happen?" Inevitably the question will come up: "Why?" How could God let this happen? Why? Doesn't he care? You've already suffered enough. Good things are supposed to come to those who wait. Well, Lord, I'm still waiting! You've tried your best. You thought you were making the right decisions. You know that you aren't perfect. At the same time, at least you try and do right with people. Good things are supposed to happen to good people. You know you don't deserve anything from the Lord, at the same time, Lord, why don't you do something? What are you trying to accomplish? Why do you allow this suffering? How could you permit this to happen? Why did you send this into my life? I have the right to know! Don't you care?

It's not hard for me to imagine Job thinking similar things. In fact, he's even ready to plead his case before God. Don't you care, Lord? Job wants to take God to court and call him into account: "Let the Almighty answer me!" Job demands (Job 31:35).

And He does. I'm sure it's not what Job wants to hear, but it's what he needs. Out of the storm the Lord speaks. "**Who is this that obscures my plans with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me.**" Who do you think you are, Job? First off, you have no idea what you are talking about

speaking without knowledge of God's plans. And to make it worse, your words, your theories, are darkening the truth! No, you don't get to question me! Brace yourself, you will answer me. **“Where, were you, Job, when I laid the earth's foundations? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone—while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?”**

The Lord doesn't speak to you from a whirlwind. He does speak to you from his Word. Who do you think you are? How much of what we say, theorize, may-be's and what-ifs with what God is doing that we offer up to try to answer that big question “why” obscures and distracts from who God is? Instead, does it give the impression that God is some tyrannical dictator that you need to keep happy, or else? (FYI: He's not.) Does it actually help, or are they just words without knowledge of God's actual plan? Does it instead lead to not trusting in God's plan and demand He make an alternate one. How often does it lead to complaining and thinking we should have more control over our lives. Brace yourself; it's not you who gets to question. You will answer.

Where were you when the Lord ordered protons and neutrons to make atoms that form elements to work together to make the foundation of this world? Where were you when he set the exact balance of gases in the atmosphere to sustain life so that it prospers and grows? We have yet to discover any planets that can do that. Where were you when he pulled up the highest mountains to reach to the sky while dragging down the depths of the sea? Where were you when he, as effortlessly as an artist puts paint onto a canvas, he set the rivers and streams through rolling hills and valleys? Where were you when the Lord precisely measured out his building so that nothing is here by accident, a freak chance or happy mistake? Where were you as he spun this world into motion measuring out day, night, seasons and years? Where were you as he set the footings of this rock that is earth into space so it does not fall into oblivion? Were you there as he sets it to on course at the exact distance from the sun so that crops will grow, water flows, and life exists? Where were you when creation itself and the heavenly beings, the angels, shout for joy and praised God at all he had done?

The Lord doesn't let Job answer. He continues: **“Are you the one who shut the sea behind doors when it burst forth from the womb, when I made the clouds its garment and wrapped it in thick darkness, when I fixed limits for it and set its doors and bars in place, when I said, ‘This far you may come and no farther; here is where your proud waves halt’ (v8-11)?** Not you, then who?

Was it you? We are still fascinated by the power of water how it carves through stone, earth, even steel. We stand helpless as rivers flood fields and hurricanes crash into cities causing billions of dollars of destruction. Sure we can control water flow with pipes, pumps, dams and other systems. But we are at its mercy when those systems fail and we realize how little control we really have. And, yet, who is the one who sees this ferocious force and shuts it up so that people can walk through on dry ground in the Red Sea? Who stops the flow of a flooding river so his people cross the Jordan into the Promised Land? Who is the one who looks at the raging seas and sees a baby that he wraps in swaddling clothes and keeps in its

place? Like with a baby throwing a temper tantrum, he sets it in a play area, sets up the safety gates, and tells it, “You can only go this far.” As powerful as those oceans are, as mighty as the hurricanes can be, as tall as those wave rage, the waters always go back and will not flood this earth because He says so.

Who am I that I dare to call into account and dare to demand answers from him? Who am I to think I can bring the Lord down to my level?

Point blank: God is under no obligation to tell us why or answer us. He didn’t have to with Job, either. But because of his love and mercy, the Lord does not ignore his servant. But, does God care? Really, we are going to ask that of the same Lord who planned out this world set the plan into motion to save his fallen creation. The same Lord who measured out the boundaries of this earth measured out the time and events so that when the time had fully come, he sent his Son for us who question him. Does God care? Jesus carefully and precisely lived his life according to God’s will never slipping up once. He’s the same Lord who sleeps peacefully in a boat tossed and turned by the sea because he perfectly trusts in the one who rules the wind and the waves. He measured out his time on this earth knowing what exactly needs to be done and when to save you. Does he care? He braced himself like a man under God’s wrath so that you might have peace with God. He stood in your place in God’s courtroom receiving the due punishment we deserve. He answers for the questions and accusations charged against you so that he might declare you justified—not guilty of a single sin. And only when the exact payment is made will he cry out, “It is finished.” He dies so that you might live. Does he care about you? Look at all that he has done. Does he care? Three days later, he lives so that you might live eternally with him.

No, he’s under no obligation to answer you. But he does speak to you through His Word. And from that Word we hear Jesus. “Who am I?” Jesus asks. “I’m your living Savior who will bring you through the storms of life. As long as you live here there will be bad things that happen to good people. That’s what happens because you live in a sin-filled world. But, know this: no matter what you face, you have peace with God because I live. That means God is your ever-present help in trouble. Though it seems like everything is crashing around you He is your refuge who protects you and strength who fights for you. It may not be what you want to hear, but why something happens is not the most important thing for you to understand. What is, that you remember who God is and who you are to him. And who are you? Your name is written in the Book of Life. Since before those foundations of this world were set and the pillars were put in place, God chose you to be his own. Who are you? You are a baptized child of God whose sins have been washed away. The eternal God who created all things took a special interest in you and brought you into his family. You don’t always need to know why. It’s not going to change who God is and who you are to him. You are exactly where he wants you to be. So, be still, and know I am God.” Amen.