

Job 40-42v6

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[0 : 00] We do turn in Job. Job 40 to 42 verse 6. Our never ending series in Job! is near conclusion.

So I've got one more sermon. If I can get away with preaching it next Sunday,! I will two Sundays before Christmas, but we'll see. And so I want us to look at Job 40 verse 1 to 42 verse 6. And so, children, I don't know whether you picked up the monsters, in the reading. There are two monsters. Alright? And if you like drawing monsters, you can pick out from this passage the monsters.

It's a great thing to draw, alright? So tonight, I want us to meet these two monsters. That's what God says to Job in this passage. Our translation just gives us a little bit of help.

It says in verse 15, chapter 40 verse 15, Behemoth, Behemoth, Behemoth, He's perhaps an elephant, more likely a hippopotamus.

[1 : 04] Then you've got verse 1 of 41, Leviathan. Some people think of a whale, or more likely a kind of crocodile. And it's clear that they're two monsters.

I found an article on the BBC News website. It's an incredible story called, Facing the Crocodile at My Wife. And in Uganda, Dimitriya Nibirai, she was killed by a crocodile.

She went to the lake near her home to fetch water. And the animal later came back to the area, but found Nibirai's husband waiting, ready to take revenge. It's an amazing story.

You can look it up. Google it. So devastated was he by the loss of his wife that he was determined to take revenge. And after a failed attempt with a barbed spear, specially made, he went to fight it again with the protests of the villagers ringing in his ears.

Don't try and kill the beast, they said. Don't try and kill the beast. It's too big. The crocodile was four meters long. It weighed over 600 kg. And I won't tell you what happened.

[2 : 15] But it's a great story. How would you fancy it? Face to face with a man-eating beast. We do not want to meet a monster, do we?

No one wants to meet a monster. So what is God doing here? Why does God present Job with two monsters? Two animals, if in fact they are animals. How are they relevant to the issue at hand, which is in chapter 14, verse 8.

That's the issue. Will you even put me in the wrong, says God? Will you condemn me that you, Job, be in the right?

In God's first speech to Job, he's darkened his counsel, his wisdom, his plan. Job has suggested, he's hinted, God cannot be in control of the world.

But notice tonight, the focus shifts. Or better to say, the focus sharpens. The deeper issue comes into view.

[3 : 26] How can you, God, be just to do what you've done to me? And God says, I want to introduce you to two creatures.

George Bernard Shaw, says Job 40 and 41, in the preface to one of his plays, God really has to do better in explaining the problem of evil than to say to Job, you can't make a hippopotamus, can you?

You can't make a crocodile. So what is God doing here? Well, what I think, I think is, here is the closest you will come in the Bible and in the lives of our faith to God explaining the mystery of evil and death and suffering.

And I say the closest because again, it's not a complete answer. It is one that satisfies, satisfies Job, we'll see that. But it may not, tonight, satisfy all your intellectual questioning.

Job comes to see himself as a child and he comes to see God as a father. He comes to see himself as a creature and God as creator. And I think if we come deeply to accept that truth first of all, these

passages will be acceptable to us and satisfying to us.

[4 : 47] I think it's the most important thing for us to understand as we come to the end of the book of Job. it's not can I understand who God is at the end of it, but can I see myself properly?

Have I understood what it means to be limited, to be humble, to be a weak child with a mighty, unlimited, strong God?

God. And if we come to this passage and this book and we live our lives with that attitude, I think we'll find this really helpful. So I want to do two things. I want to look at God's claim and then I want to look at the evidence for the claim.

The claim is there in verses 6 to 14 and the evidence is in the rest of the chapters. The evidence you've got exhibit A in God's defense is Behemoth and then exhibit B is Leviathan.

Those two monsters, they are God's evidence for the claim that he makes. And what I want to try and do is to lead you to this table this evening. I tell the bread and the wine in front, well, not in front of your eyes, in those boxes.

[6 : 04] That this, as you eat of the bread and drink of the wine tonight, that is evidence that God is able to make good on his claim. So what is God's claim? God's claim is this.

You, you are not strong enough to bring about justice for the world, but I am. That's God's claim.

You are not strong enough to bring about justice for the world, but I am, God says.

So whether there's justice in the universe, that's the key issue, isn't it, from verse 6. Do you see how God makes a claim about this? There's still rhetorical questions.

That's his kind of chosen interrogation device in verse 9. But instead of going over aspects of his own governance, how he rules, and defending himself point by point, I did this because of that, or the reason I didn't do that is because of this, so what does God do?

He gently mocks Job. He gently mocks Job, and he says, Job, have a go at being judge of all the earth. You've discredited me and condemned my justice.

[7 : 11] Well, come on up, Job. I'll step aside. Here's the bench. Here's the hammer and the gavel. Come and give it a go. And we've all been there, haven't we? We've all read a court verdict, a decision of the judge, and we shake our heads and tut, tut, as we keep reading the newspaper, and we think, how can that be?

Well, would we like to swap places? Do we think we could do it better? Would we have a better handle on things? What would happen if you and I were to swap places with the judge in the high court?

Well, we'd have to dress like him, wouldn't we? We'd have to look like him. Do you see what God says to Job? Come and put my robes on, verse 10. Here's my judge's wig and here's my gown.

It's the gown and the wig of majesty and dignity. Oh, you look wonderful in them, Job. Do they fit? What's that? They're a little bit heavier, are they? Never mind, just go on with the job.

What's the first thing to do is you get your feet under the desk. Day one, new deity in charge of the universe. Oh yes, unleash the fury of your wrath.

[8 : 21] Verses 11 and 12. There's a very heavy caseload today. Today, Job in court, we're dealing with every single proud man or woman in the universe and the need is for them to be brought low and to be humbled and in fact, for final, complete and perfect justice to be given in all the earth and the wicked to be destroyed once and for all.

How are you getting on, Job? How's it going? Maybe raise your voice a little bit more and maybe you're not angry enough.

Can they hear you in Kuala Lumpur or the Andes? What do you mean you feel a bit powerless to do anything about South Africa or Greenland? Look, says God, verse 14, when you can do all of that, when you finally manage to put it off, well then, I will admit that you are powerful enough to save yourself and I'll gladly abdicate.

I'll gladly hand over the reins of the universe to you. I think in the mockery there's a wonderful truth for Job to learn.

What does Job want? Do you remember as we've gone through, what does Job want? Job wants justice for himself. He wants answers for his pain, his suffering.

[9 : 47] What are you doing with me, God? It's not fair, it's not right. And I think that God is saying to Job that when you sit where I sit and when you see what I see and when you judge what I will judge, Job, the problem is not just you, but the whole world.

And I think that's really what surprised me as I've come to these chapters. It's an astonishing thing that God has been responding to Job's human pain without one single reference to human beings. What has he talked about? Do you remember? He's talked about the sea and the sky, the horizons, the ostriches, the oxen, the horses, the lions, now a hippo and a crocodile. Why? Why has he responded to one human being's anguish by not speaking about human beings?

Isn't it because he's saying to Job, you think I'm just concerned with you and your pain? You and your pain. But Job, I'm big enough to bring about justice for the whole world, for the cosmos. not just for you, for everyone, not just for you. And you, little old you, are beginning to wonder if I've got it right with you. One man, in one little place, in one small part of the world, and you want to shake your fist at me.

[11:17] Job, I'm big enough to right a million wrongs. I'm big enough to humble a thousand dictators, to destroy all the wickedness from the earth. Can you do that? And if you can't, if you can't, don't you think you'd be better to think twice before you accuse me of doing wrong?

That's the divine claim. Job, you are not strong enough to bring about justice for the world, but I am. Now, let's look at the evidence. Two more animals, monsters, a hippo and a crocodile, except Bernard Shaw, he missed the point, didn't he?

Is this really just a hippo and a crocodile? These two creatures, at the very least, they are like them, but look at chapter 41, verse 19.

What crocodile do you know that does this? Out of his mouth go flaming torches, sparks of fire leap forth. It seems, doesn't it, that there's much more going on with this description of these animals. animals. It is theoretically possible that this is a literal description of an animal that doesn't exist anymore.

[12:37] A dinosaur that could breathe fire or something like that. There's some commentators that want to say that's very, very important. Here's another option, though. Here's another option, that God is taking one of the most terrifying animals that there is on earth, the crocodile, and if you like, enlarging it in poetry.

He's allowing it to take on a more terrifying characteristic. It becomes a symbol, an image to represent something else. And I think the closest image that we have to this sort of creature is if you were to try and draw it with everything that it can do, well I think you'd come up with something that looked a bit more like a dragon, wouldn't you?

Than a crocodile. We do this all the time in our world, wouldn't we? And so I don't know what you've drawn, children, but you probably, if you listen to the reading, you'll probably come up with something like a dragon.

I think it happens in literature all the time, doesn't it? In literature where it talks about the beast, this kind of mythical figure. The beast, it's speaking of a kind of savage animal, evil inside.

And I think God is using a picture of the type of animals that would have terrified Job. The hippo and the crocodile. And he's adding extra elements to those animals to make them even more terrifying.

[14:04] And he's saying that these animals represent something. Behemoth represents death, Leviathan represents the devil. So do you remember what we saw? What do we see?

We saw the place, didn't we, as a place, the sea, as a place of evil. So back in Job 7 verse 12, Job said this to God in great bitterness, Am I the sea or the monster of the deep that you put me under guard?

Leviathan is the great sea monster. In the book of Daniel, chapter 7, there are four terrifying beasts. Do you remember where they come from? They come from the sea. Psalm 74 talks about the crossing of the Red Sea.

It says this, you broke the heads of the sea monsters on the waters. You crushed the head of Leviathan. In the book of Revelation, the end of the Bible, do you remember John sees a dragon, the ancient serpent, standing on the edge of the sea.

And here's the thing, the devil is pictured as a great sea monster. Revelation 12 verse 9, and the great dragon was thrown down. That ancient serpent who is called the devil and Satan the deceiver of the whole world.

[15:17] And so if you think of evil, and you were going to try to conceptualize or illustrate or symbolize the devil, what would you come up with?

Depends on what books you've been reading. If you're a Harry Potter fan, you'd come up with something like Voldemort. If you're a Lord of the Rings fan, who would it be?

Sauron, isn't it? Yeah, yeah, that's what it would be. Take your pick. But in the Bible, you do it, you conceptualize or you illustrate or you symbolize the devil by coming up with images of terrifying beasts.

Like a lion, or so often a dragon or a sea monster. We do it with death, don't we? So how do we conceptualize death? What's the kind of picture that people have in mind when they think of death? It's the Grim Reaper, isn't it? You know? The white face mask and the black hooded cape and a scythe with a long kind of bony hand. And so here, by portraying Behemoth, whatever he is or was, it's a picture of death.

[16:29] It's an animal who feeds and devours the produce of the hills, an animal who's mighty but who can hide and conceal himself. Look at verse 23. He's an animal who's not frightened by the kind of things that would kill anyone or anything else.

And God is giving Job in chapter 40 a picture of death and in chapter 41 a picture of the devil. Now, so much for the symbols. How do they count as evidence for God's claim that he is strong enough to bring about justice for the whole world?

Well, they count as evidence in a beautiful way. So just look at the rhetorical questions. These two wild monsters being completely out of control in the world.

They're terrifying. They're lethal. They're not your pets. You cannot tame them or control them. So look at chapter 40 in verse 24. Can one take him by his eyes or pierce his nose with a snare? Can you draw out Leviathan with a fish hook or press down his tongue with a cord? Can you put a rope in his nose or pierce his jaw with a hook? The implication, of course, is no one can.

[17:43] You can't do that. And you, Job, you cannot do it, but I can. You cannot domesticate these animals, Job. No one keeps them in their backyard or in their bath.

Or if they do, they don't keep them there for long without disaster. But I can, Job. Look at the mockery and the humor. Look at verse 5. Will you play with him as a bird? Or will you put him on a leash for your girls?

You might have a pet parrot, Job, or a pet puppy, and you can put the pet puppy on a lead for your girls, but imagine coming home one evening and walking into the house and shouting, girls, I've got a surprise for you.

I've got a minister friend in Scotland who burgled, so he bought a recording of two very, very aggressive dogs.

It was played so loudly. And it was put on the alarm, so if a burglar came. You know, these kind of snarling, vicious dogs. You know, all that.

[18:48] Anyways, girls were in junior school and they came back from school and he said, oh, girls, I've got a puppy for you. And he left them outside the room and went in and put the recording on.

They both raised the rest of the bed. But you can imagine it, can you? Come and meet my pet crocodile. It eats them whole for supper.

The imagery is really powerful. Here's the point. Translate it all into being really about death and the devil. Can you capture death, Job? Can you take the devil home on a lead and put him in a corner? Feed him with scraps from the table when you decide to. Make him follow you about by the hand. Can you do that, Job? Thousands of years and bloodshed, disease, death, destruction. Two world wars.

And every single bit of death and seemingly supernatural evil that's ever torn through your world and through your home and down through the generations. And every single bit of it, says God, death and the devil go hand in hand.

[19:53] They always go together. And to me, says God, they are like docile pets on a lead, not wild monsters in the night. You see, God is saying to Job, if you look at verse 10, if you are not fierce enough to get Leviathan to stand down, but to me it's like a little domestic animal.

If you're terrified of him, then what are you going to be like when you meet me? If you think that being in his presence is scary, then what must it be like to be in my presence?

Look at verse 11. What does that mean?

Verse 11, verse 11, what does that mean for Leviathan? What does it mean? 41, verse 11, who was given to me that I should repay him?

Whatever is under the whole heaven is mine. Just think about that for a minute. Who was first given to me that I should repay him?

[21 : 07] Whatever is under heaven, the whole heaven is mine. What does that mean for Leviathan? It means this, the devil is a creature. The devil, said Martin Luther, is God's devil.

And death and the devil are on a leash. And they are bound by God, not free. And so God is coming here, isn't he?

Very, very close to revealing to Job what we've known right from the start of the book. That the devil has been set loose to work against Job, and yet, of course, he is not completely free.

He is bound. Remember, this far and no further, he is told. And this is what Job is coming to see. Whatever happens in the world that feels like evil running wild and free is, in fact, restrained evil, controlled evil.

You know the story, don't you, of Pilgrim's Progress, where Pilgrim is walking, and as he looks through the gates, he sees these lions that look so fierce, and they roar at him.

[22 : 14] He thinks they'll devour him, and then he notices they're actually on a leash, that they can go so far and no further, and he walks between them. And so God has put in front of Job the evidence of death and the devil on a leash.

And so I want to close this evening with this. As we come to the Lord's table, God is putting in front of us the evidence of death and the devil defeated. And Job came to bow low in awe before God and in wonder.

And he saw that God held his life in his hand and that death and the devil in the other hand. And so how much more should we bow low tonight?

Because we see not just that God restrains them, but he's conquered them. He has done something to make death die and to destroy the devil.

Now, so come with me to Hebrews chapter 2. Hebrews chapter 2. It says this.

[23 : 24] Hebrews chapter 2. It's on page 1002 if you're on a church Bible. Hebrews chapter 2 and verse 14. Since, therefore, the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partake of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. Therefore, he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. So ever since the devil induced Adam and Eve to sin, the devil, if you like, stood there like a jailer, jangling the keys of the prison cell, as person after person are swept into death, into his clutches.

And there he stands, strong and proud, with his captives, and the entire human race is in his sway and grip, and no one, absolutely no one can do anything about it. For we all die.

And the natural inclination of the human heart is not just to die, but to fear the death that we're going to die. But look what the writer is saying. He is saying there is one death which has shattered the chains of death.

[25 : 08] And when somebody is held captive, the jailer, outside with the keys, the jailer either needs to open the door to let him out, or somebody needs to come and remove the jailer.

And Jesus came to destroy the jailer. And Jesus came to break open the prison doors and set the captives free. And so we know, don't we, the rescue of hostages.

Special forces, they enter the domain of the enemy and they defeat them and they blow open the cell and they extract the people held prisoner. And that, this writer says, is what Jesus came to do as our champion.

But he did it by dying. He entered death. And he broke it from the inside out. And because he came out the other side with death itself lying down at his feet.

And here this evening is evidence of that. The evidence that God himself in Jesus is strong enough to bring about the justice, not for you, not just for you, but for the world.

[26 : 25] Let's pray.