

30a JOB

This is Friday, the 29th of December, 2006. We continue our study in the Book of Job, resuming in Chapter 40. We'll take a moment here to collect our thoughts, to address ourselves to Scripture under the teaching ministry of God's Holy Spirit.

Shall we pray? Father, we are grateful, as always, for another opportunity to gather as believers of like mind with a shared enthusiasm for your Word and the truth that it contains. Through these passages, we come to a greater appreciation and understanding of your character and your plan and your purpose and the reason for our existence. We thank you for the preservation of the Scriptures and all those faithful men who have faithfully rendered their ministries down through the years and the centuries so that we have a copy of your Word in our hands.

We have the faithful transmission of the inspired text, and we ask your blessing on us as we study it together. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Job chapter 40, since it's been a couple of weeks since we looked at it, we have worked our way down to about verse 15, but keep in mind that this is a text that faithfully records God's words delivered to a group of men many hundreds of years ago. I would estimate probably about 36 or 3700 years ago, which is a long time, somewhere between Jacob and Moses, possibly even around the time of Jacob, although I think a bit later. And there is a great deal of misunderstanding.

I was reading an article. I've read all the ones I could lay my hands on about the book of Job. And the introduction of this article by a fellow named Greg Parsons is from Jacksonville, Texas, actually.

He says, It's common knowledge that the book of Job is universally admired as a literary masterpiece in world literature. Although most of the superlatives have been exhausted to describe its literary excellence, it seems to defy more than a superficial analysis. There has been little agreement with regard to the purpose and message of the book.

And it is, to me, tragic that it has been so misunderstood. And I think you'll agree that we've at least made a slightly deeper dent as we've gone through the first 39 chapters in understanding the structure, in understanding what the prologue signifies, what the dialogues between the three friends in Job entail, what facets of human experience they reflect, the kinds of thinking that they evidence, the questions that they raise and fail to answer, and then culminating in the introductory section with Elihu. And again, I read just another article where the guy was saying that the Elihu section is generally dismissed.

When the source critical theorists come to the book of Job, they take out chapter 28, they take out the dialogues of Elihu, they take out the epilogue, they say, well, these are later additions because they don't make any sense. And it is as though they contribute nothing to the book. The

speeches of Elihu are almost universally dismissed as not really adding anything to the book.

And the section that we're in now with Leviathan and Behemoth are often dismissed as probably later additions or accretions, borrowings from contemporary mythology and so on. So there is a lot for us to cover here. And in particular to understand that far from being some sort of a tack-on or an accretion, Elihu's speeches are the essential prologue to God himself.

If you don't pay attention to what Elihu says, you're not going to understand what God says. In the same way that without the Lord Jesus Christ coming and revealing the Father, we could not have an appreciation for his plan and purpose in human history. It just doesn't come together without Jesus Christ.

And this is one of the great Old Testament shadows and pictures of the coming ministry of God the Son who will introduce and prepare the way for the Father to reveal himself to those who express their faith in him. Now, we have come to chapter 40, and we've seen that as God began his speeches here, he used a tenfold division, if you will, ten sections that I compare to the Ten Commandments, to the five on the first table and five on the second table, five that look up toward God, five that look across toward man. These are given in the pictures of God's control over creation, his power and authority as Creator God, and then looking at the animals and the characteristics of that which man must deal with on the surface of the earth.

And in that connection, as God continues, we now arrive at, after Job's response in the beginning of chapter 40, the Lord is now going to continue his discourse here, and we've looked at the first 14 verses, and just to provide the context for what we're going to move into tonight, we'll read those. Chapter 40, Moreover, the Lord answered Job and said, Shall the one who contends with the Almighty correct him? He who rebukes God, let him answer it. And we've given a slightly improved translation of this, which you may recall, this is sort of a gentle prod from God.

It isn't quite as harsh as this translation makes it sound. After explaining these heavenly truths and earthly truths, God says now, Was there something you wanted to inform me about? Have you got some information? Is there something I've left out here? This is instruction for the purpose of correction. And, of course, Job answers and says, I am vile.

And this is the common response when God reveals his glory. Here he has done it largely in the verbal manner. His visible glory, so to speak, is hidden in the whirlwind.

All he does is speak. It is the audible voice of God that manifests these truths, and the glory that is revealed in those statements essentially puts Job on his spiritual face, just as it does with Ezekiel and Isaiah and Elijah and Paul on the road to Damascus and many others. When they come face to face with God, they just go down on their face.

Behold, I am vile. What shall I answer you? I lay my hand over my mouth. Once I have spoken, I will not answer it twice, but I will proceed no farther.

Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said, Prepare yourself like a man. I will question you, and you shall answer me. And this is a repetition from what he said at the beginning of the previous speech.

And it's important to note this. We're going to see this recur in the not too distant future. Would you indeed annul my justice? Would you declare me guilty so that you may be right? Do you have an arm as powerful as God's? Can you thunder with a voice like His? Adorn yourself then with majesty and excellence.

Clothe yourself with glory and honor. Disperse the rage of your wrath. Look on everyone who is proud and humble him.

Look on everyone who is proud and bring him low. Tread down the wicked in their place. This was the point of the preceding section.

You remember that the first half, the first five dealt with God's command of creation, of the universe, of the sky and the clouds and the sea and these great overwhelming forces over which man has no influence whatsoever. So, God says, If you're going to say anything about my justice, if you're going to make any commentary, you need to have the same power that God has. And this is sort of a reference to the sky and so on.

Majesty and splendor, thundering with an arm and so on. Then, disperse the rage of your wrath. Look on those who are proud and humble them.

Look on everyone who is proud and bring him low. This is the horizontal frame. So, in these few statements, God is essentially reviewing the first five and the second five sections that He just delivered before the break.

Tread down the wicked in their place. Hide them in the dust together. Bind their faces in hidden darkness.

Then I will confess to you that your own right hand can deliver you. And this is where we left off last time. Remember, the right hand is the strength.

And there is a comparison. With this power, with this creative authority that God has, as a concomitant, as an accompanying truth, God has a plan and a purpose. He didn't just create it for no purpose.

He didn't just make it to wind it up and watch it go. There is a reason. There is a purpose.

So, God says to Job, unless you have similar creative power, unless you have similar authority over creation and sentient beings, you are not qualified to judge the purposes and the plan that these things are created to fulfill. The two sort of go together. Heaven help us if some human being had the creative power of God, but not the planning and knowledge and wisdom of God.

They have to go hand in hand. This is the problem with someone who winds up with a lot of power and not a lot of brains. That's why you have celebrities running amok.

This is why Nero, for example, was a crummy Caesar. Lots of power, not a lot of brain cells. The two need to go together.

So, God is basically saying, look, your knowledge is proportional to your power. Look at my power. Look at my glory.

My knowledge is proportional. Look at your power. Look at your glory.

Your knowledge is proportional. So, are you going to use your knowledge to judge my knowledge? He's moving from the concrete to that in the idea realm. This brings us now to verse 15.

He says, Look now at the behemoth which I made along with you. He eats grass like an ox, strengthens his hips, power in his stomach, tail like a cedar, centers of the thighs, etc. You've probably read this and you're familiar with it before.

Right away in verse 15, we have an interesting decision to make. Knowing Hebrew as you do, you know that behemoth is what kind of word? Singular or plural? We've covered this many times. Im and ot are plural suffixes, right? Im is the masculine.

It's actually kind of a dual. Mayim, shamayim, etc. And ot is the feminine.

Plural. So, it says, Look at the behemoth. This would be the beasts if it were the plural of behemah, which is a feminine noun.

Behemah, behemoth. You have this over in Genesis where God creates the beasts and so on. He's translated beasts dozens and dozens of times in the Old Testament.

But then it says, Look at the behemoth which I made along with you. He eats grass like an ox. It's not plural.

The pronoun is not plural. And it's not feminine either. So, we have kind of a problem here.

Now, the vast overwhelming preponderance of scholarly opinion is that this is indeed the plural of behemoth. It is behemoth. I've told you before that sometimes the feminine will be used to indicate something that is in the realm of ideas.

You'll take a thing and kind of lift it into the non-material or the non-literal realm and personify a thing or abstract a thing. In Hebrew, you can give it the plural. The problem here is that this word is so common as a plural, behemoth, the beasts, the cattle.

It's often translated cattle. But it doesn't really work that way for this word. In fact, there is a

cognate in Egyptian that sounds identical to behema or behemoth.

It's a sound alike. It's what we might call a homonym that has no connection really to the Hebrew word behema. And it means, or it meant in Egyptian, water ox.

And I believe that this is not, although it has over the course of copying in the centuries in the Jewish targums and so on, very early on the Jews just figured, well, this is our good old word behema, behemoth, and it's some kind of a beast. But I think way back in the days of Job, there was a sound alike word. It was a loan word from Egyptian that was taken from their experience of watching this giant, what they called the water ox.

The ox, remember, is the strongest animal, the strongest land animal. It's the Ford tractor of the ancient world, right? But this one was in the water. So it was the strongest thing in the water.

And it dwelt in the fresh water of the Nile, and they called it the water ox, the behemoth. And that's what is being spoken of here. So we want to reject the idea that this might be some sort of glorification of the standard word for beast and see its roots elsewhere.

Now, any note that you read, any study Bible, if you go to the ISBI, International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, or any Bible dictionary and look this up, you look up behemoth, it's going to say that this is a reference to one of two things. Either a mythical animal that did not really exist, or it is a poetic license dealing with a known animal, probably the hippopotamus. So, for example, if you look this up, we look up behemoth in Harper's Bible Dictionary.

It was probably originally the hippopotamus, but intertestamental authors and later rabbis understood it to be of mythic significance. Look it up in the New Bible Dictionary. It says, morphologically, this is the Hebrew plural of behemoth, and in all of the places it occurs, such as Deuteronomy 32-24, where God is pronouncing dire consequences on those who are disobedient, He says, They shall be wasted with hunger, devoured by pestilence and bitter destruction.

I will also send against them the teeth of behemoth, with the poison of serpents of the dust. This is an imprecation, this is a curse, this is a prediction of judgment on those who are disobedient. We had this in Job 12-7, Ask the beasts, and they will teach you, and the birds of the air, and they will tell you.

Now notice, in Deuteronomy 32, what was the association? The behemoth were associated with what? What was the other animal mentioned in Deuteronomy 32-24? Behemoth and serpents. Here, in Job 12-7, you have the behemoth and the birds of the air. What do we know about serpents and birds of the air? What do they symbolize? What are they associated with, spiritually speaking, in the Bible? It's the birds of the air that come and take away the seed, that hits the hard ground.

Serpent, we know all about the serpent. Psalm 49-12, Nevertheless man, though in honor, does not remain. He is like the behemoth that perish.

Well, you could say he's like the animals that perish, like the beasts that perish, or he's like some very large, soon-to-be-extinct animal that perishes. Same thing in verse 20 of that psalm, Psalm 49-20. That same thing is repeated.

Psalm 50 and verse 10, For every beast of the forest is mine, and the behemoth on a thousand hills. Interesting allusion there. Psalm 73-22, I was so foolish and ignorant, I was like behemoth before you.

I'm giving you these because this plural, behemoth, only occurs nine times in the Old Testament. I've given you the first seven, which were Deuteronomy 32-24, Job 12-7, Job 40-15, which is our passage, Psalm 49-12, Psalm 49-20, Psalm 50-10, Psalm 73-22, the next one is Jeremiah 12-4, How long will the land mourn, and the herbs of every field wither? The behemoth and the birds are consumed for the wickedness of those who dwell there, because they said, He will not see our final end. If you look at that in context, it's very interesting.

Once again, behemoth and birds are associated. Then finally, Habakkuk 2-17, The violence done to Lebanon will cover you, and the plunder of behemoth, which made them afraid because of men's blood, and the violence of the land and the city, and of all who dwell in it. Almost always a negative connotation, a judgment scenario with behemoth.

Now, why is that important? Well, God says to Job, Job, look now at behemoth, which I made along with you. He eats grass like an ox. He says, I made behemoth, and I made you.

In Job 40-15, the New Bible Dictionary goes on to say, the references seem to suggest a specific animal. It is usual to take the plural, behemoth, as having intensive force, a great beast, and referring to the hippopotamus. Most commentators, a lot of translations will put, look now at the hippopotamus, which I made along with you.

And it goes on to say, the hippopotamus identification may be tentatively accepted in the present state of knowledge. Once in a while you see someone say, well, maybe it's the elephant. But let's read the description, and then we'll get a little bit more specific on what behemoth actually is.

First fact, he eats grass like the ox. He's a vegetarian, not a carnivore. His strength is in his hips, and his power is in his stomach muscles, in his belly.

Some here see an allusion to reproductive force. I don't think that's necessarily the case, but I tell you, if you start reading commentaries, you can find one of almost every idea known to man. But it literally says, look.

You have it translated, see now. But God is telling Job, look. So this is something Job can see.

This is something that is visible to Job. And that is going to pertain when we start thinking about the possibility that this is a mythological creature. You can't look at a myth.

You can't observe something that is imaginary. So God says, look, verse 15. And nah is the suffix that makes a thing an imperative.

And this is a strong imperative. He says, look now. Behold, Job behemoth, which I made with you.

Is there a missing verb here? Which I made to coexist with you? Or did I make him at the same time with you? Green grass like the ox he is eating. And this is yokel. O-E, the O-E in fix is like I-N-G in Hebrew.

That means he is eating. Doesn't mean he used to eat before he went extinct. Doesn't mean, you know, a mythological creature, you don't typically talk much about their diet.

This seems to be a real creature that exists in Job's day that Job can look at and Job can watch him eat the grass. Yokel, from achal, which means to consume, to eat. And it's a gerund, it's a participle.

It means he's doing it now, he eats. Then it says again, behold, look, Koho, his strength is in his loins. Now, you know, the loins, this is where they get the idea that it's somehow talking about his great reproduction or whatever.

I don't think so. But you cannot help but think of some sort of a dinosaur type of creature that's got, if you've seen the pictures of your long necked, big tailed, vegetarian dinosaurs, where is their power? Is it in their forelegs or is it in their big back legs? It's their loins. They've got the diminutive little feet up here that they don't seem to use for much.

And then they've got these great giant legs, sinews, and the belly that surrounds them and helps to hold them upright and so on. That's where the power is. The center of gravity is right there and the thing can't easily be moved.

Swing his long neck around, swing his long tail around. So the mental image, without knowing what Behemoth is, this is what you start to develop. His strength is in his loins and his power is in the muscle of his stomach.

That's what it literally says. It's in the muscle of his stomach. His tail, he literally straightens.

You remember we were talking about in Ecclesiastes. We got toward the end. Well, actually, we looked at it in chapter 3. Remember when we covered the swan song of David, the song of David right before he died? We talked about the word kapetz as being a purpose, as a goal.

You move in a direction toward a thing. Well, this is the word here, kapetz, but it's the verb form.

It literally means to keep straight or to straighten.

He straightens or he keeps straight his tail like a cedar. This comes to have the idea that he moves his tail. His tail is curled and he straightens it.

He whips it out. When he straightens it, it moves things. It propels things.

It exerts force like a cedar. Now, what do you know about a cedar tree? Cedar trees are tall, straight, and tapering. Big at the bottom, small at the top.

It's like a cedar. Long, straight, and tapering. That's what a cedar is.

And so kapetz comes to have the idea of stiffening a thing, straightening a thing, extending something out like a cedar tree. So this is a big tail. Now, what's the problem with the hippopotamus theory of behemoth? Have you ever seen the tail on a hippopotamus? That is the most pathetic excuse for a tail in nature.

It's like a little piece of rope. It doesn't reach far enough to swat flies. It's just kind of an adornment more than anything else.

I don't know that it does anything other than just provide a nice little cosmetic effect for the rear end of the hippopotamus. But it does not swing like a cedar. I mean, how can you even suggest? Have you seen the tail on an elephant? Same problem.

So, he moves, he extends, he stiffens, he swings, he deploys his tail. I think deploy is a good word. He deploys his tail like a cedar.

And, of course, this is based on having the stance and having the belly muscles and the strength in the loins. You don't need strength in the loins and a strong stomach to swing a hippopotamus tail. But you do to swing something like a large dinosaur tail like you see on one of the... I can't think of the name of a grass-eating dinosaur.

What's the big long neck thing? Brontosaurus, yeah. Think of a brontosaurus idea. The sinews of his thighs are strong.

Sarag. It just means everything in the loin, leg, tail area. This is the most impressive thing about this animal.

It's big in the hips and the tail and the feet and the stomach. That's where the power and everything happens. That's not my impression of a hippopotamus.

Hippopotamus, the thing that impresses you is the gaping mouth. You know, his powers in his jaws. Hippo's tail and hindquarters are kind of not that impressive.

It just says his thighs are strong. Verse 18 says his bones are like copper barrels or copper tubes.

Copper bars is the idea here.

This is now getting on the inside. His bones are like beams or bars or tubes of bronze. His ribs are like bars of iron or rods of iron.

Now what's interesting about this, if you know anything about the ancient sequence of history and ages and so forth, what age is Job ostensibly living in? Middle Bronze. He's living in the Middle Bronze Age. Early Iron Age is circa 1000 B.C., the time of David, Jonathan.

Remember the whole thing about nobody had an iron sword in Israel, only the Philistines could smelt and so on. And yet somebody in Job's day, of course you know the liberal critics would say, Aha, anachronism, it's late, nobody could do things with iron. Well, this is just a lacuna in history, an omission, a gap in the historical record, because they were smelting iron, they were forging stuff out of iron, hundreds of years before David and Solomon and so on.

And what it says, his ribs are like bars or rods of iron. Barzel is the word for iron in Hebrew. It's a very onomopoetic word, barzel.

It just sounds like something made out of iron. He will rule them with a rod of iron, he will break them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Barzel.

And once again, ribs like bars of iron. Why would this be significant? Bones and ribs that are seemingly indestructible. If a human was going to go against Behemoth and try to bring it down, he's going to come up with a sword or a spear or a big rock or arrows or some sort of weapons of the day.

And what's going to happen? They have discovered that this animal's chest can't be penetrated. His ribs are like bars of iron. You can't kill the thing.

You can't stab it in the heart. By the way, hippos are relatively easily killed with a spear. They don't have any kind of armor plating in the chest.

It was commonplace. They found fossils of a couple of different species of hippos up even in the Jordan River area. They weren't all that hard to kill.

The Egyptians perfected the technique. But this animal seems to be impervious. He is first in the ways of God.

Remember Genesis 1.1? If you know the Hebrew for this, it's Barashit, the very first word, in the beginning. Well, that's the word you have here. Rashit.

Hu Rashit. What does Hu mean in Hebrew? Who is he? He is she. And me is who? Hu Rashit.

He is the beginning of the Derek, the way of God. Derek, you can find that as a name for people. It means way in Hebrew.

He is the beginning of the way of God. Or the first, or the head. Rashit comes from Rosh.

Rosh is head. He is the head of the ways of God. Then it says, only he who made him can bring near his sword.

This is the one who manufactured, Asah. Not Barah, not created, but the one who made or manufactured him. Remember the difference between the word used for Adam and the word used for Eve? Only the one who Asah'd him can approach with a sword.

Only the one who made him can approach him with a sword. Now, we need to stop right here. Because I have two or three ideas that all need to be out at the same time.

And I can only say one of them at a time. And I couldn't figure out which ones to give you first. So, you're just going to have to take them in the order that they come.

We've read the passage and we've covered the main ideas that are in it. The main words that are in it. And we've talked about Behemoth in more or less a literal sense.

I don't think it's a hippo. I do think it's a literal creature of the dinosaur class. Maybe some of the last surviving of that species.

Still visible in Job's day. Much like the giants, the Anakim, the Nephilim. Who did not totally die out as sort of a vestige of the pre-flood era.

Those didn't die out until David's day, right? The last five sons of Anak died during David's reign. Well, in the same way, I think there were a few of these that survived post-flood. However, that does not exhaust what is being said here.

Because, as a literal beast, it has a mythological significance. So, we're going to back up and we're going to take a look. And I'm going to more or less shamelessly plunder a really great article from the Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society.

Because I searched, I can't tell you how many things I read. Finding every scrap of information on Leviathan and Behemoth. Everybody's ideas, it was leaking out my ears.

And then I found this really, actually I found a reference to this article. And then I found the article itself. And this is the deal.

And I can't say it any better than this guy said it. So, I'm going to give you the highlights from this article. It was in 1970 in the Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society.

And I finally found what I was looking for. And this is it. And you're not going to believe the guy's name, but I promise you it's his real name.

His name is Elmer Smyk, Ph.D. Elmer B. Smyk, S-M-I-C-K, Ph.D. This is a great article. It is called Mythology and the Book of Job. And what he does is basically go all the way through the book and talk about some of the same mythological elements that we've already seen earlier in the book.

You remember, cursed be the day I was born and the idea of the eclipse swallowing up the sun. We talked about the Tanin, the great serpent, early on. He talks about those very same things.

I wish I had found this article earlier. But thankfully, I think we pretty well covered things in the same way. And he relates these things to the cosmography and to the mythology that was understood in the ancient Near East.

Now, if I put you to sleep up to this point, this is the time to wake up, because this is the good part. There is an ancient god, or mythological god, so to speak, in Ugarit. Ugaritic is one of the ancient, early split-offs from the Old Semitic, and it's a parallel.

We study Ugaritic and Akkadian and so on, so that we can find out what Hebrew words mean. Well, this is an ancient civilization, and their mythology and their words and a lot of their ideas prevailed long after their civilization had kind of died out, in the same way that the Persian mythology and words persisted long after the days of Esther, long after Israel had come out of that captivity. You had the idea of paradise.

Paradesos is a Persian word. It's a Persian idea. The idea of separation between the righteous and the wicked, and the wicked going to some sort of a place of punishment.

The idea of hell or Hades or Gehenna and flames and that sort of thing. This was a Persian idea. And we talked about this when we went through Luke 16, I believe it is, where Jesus is talking about the rich man and Lazarus, and he uses that figure.

Now, I find this fascinating, because if you remember the Luke study, and you remember the rich man and Lazarus parable study, you will remember that we concluded that Jesus alluded to a common understanding that prevailed amongst the people that had its roots in pagan mythology, that had its roots in Gentile Persian mythology. And Jesus alluded to it without necessarily affirming it. But it was a convenient picture, the idea of the separation of the righteous and the wicked, of torment and so on.

Jesus incorporated that into the parable. And he didn't say, this is how it is, everybody that dies disobedient is going to be in flames. It was a metaphor.

It's a parable. Parable. Parable.

Parable. Just because the guy's name is used, Lazarus, doesn't mean it's literal. And people kind of conveniently say, well, Jesus used a real name, so it's all literal.

Everybody goes and lays in Abraham's chest, and there's a great gulf fixed, and there's flames and water on the tongue. No, it's all symbolic. It's pictorial.

And Jesus chose for his symbol this commonly understood figure. Guess what? God is doing the very same thing here with Behemoth and Leviathan. It is a commonly understood motif.

The motif, oddly enough, has its roots in reality. There was a reality that got perverted into the myth, which then God alludes to in a corrected form, in a legitimate form, stripping away the mythological elements, just as Jesus does. Jesus doesn't affirm the pagan elements in the Persian afterlife picture, but he uses the legitimate features of it to make a point, and to strike a chord with people who are very familiar.

God is going to do the same thing here. So, we're going to pause and take our break. When we come back, we'll look and see what this commonly understood myth was, who these gods were, what they represented, what they came from, and how God employs this to make a point in his dialogue.

We'll pause here and take our break.