

## NOTES AND QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP STUDY IN THE BOOK OF JOB

### PART 6 – CHAPTERS THIRTY-TWO TO FORTY-TWO

#### A REMARKABLE SOLUTION TO A TRAGIC SITUATION

At last Job's friends had no more bad advice to give. The first three visitors had run out of words without achieving their purpose of making Job admit it was his sin that God was punishing through suffering. The fourth friend, Elihu, who had waited respectfully for his elders to finish went on longer than any of them, but still had nothing helpful to add. He was defending God from Job's complaints against Him, not realising that the Lord wants us to tell Him exactly how we feel about Him even if it is anger, doubt or confusion. After his first four replies Job had stopped speaking to God and argued only against his friends. Even he now was silent after Elihu finished. This is the moment the Lord waits for when we are ready to listen to Him.

So how did God answer? We might suppose that the first thing He would do would be to put the record straight on who causes suffering by blaming the Devil. In the remaining 5 chapters there is no mention of Satan. In no way did God offer any answer to the question, 'why?', which we always ask when things go wrong. Doesn't it follow then that we as counsellors will achieve nothing useful by dwelling on the 'why' either?

The theme of God's message in chapters 38-41 is creation. First in chapter 38:1-38 He spoke of the creation of the physical world and the universe which so powerfully demonstrates His wisdom and strength which is vastly beyond our own. Then from 38:39 to the end of chapter 39 He described some of the wonders of the animal world and the remarkable features God gave them which fitted them for their unique environment.

God asked Job how would the animals and birds have got on if they had depended on man for their design?(40:1) Humbly Job admitted he had no answer and his arrogance in trying to tell God how the world should be run. God continued His illustration of the absolute inability of man to save himself by reference to two great beasts of the ancient world. Modern translators have suggested that Behemoth was a hippopotamus and Leviathan a crocodile but something far greater is implied in the description of each. Behemoth has a 'tail like a cedar' which cannot be the wispy little tail of a hippo. The picture is much more consistent with a huge land dwelling, plant eating dinosaur. Similarly Leviathan sounds much more like a meat eating monster such as Tyrannosaurus Rex. Those who dismiss such an idea because of evolutionary teaching should think again. Early histories from around the world are full of stories of dragons which breathed fire and would best be explained as dinosaurs. The book of Job may be just such an account. Whatever they were, chapters 40 and 41 make the point very graphically. God's creation is so much bigger and stronger than anything man can do.

God's message is very simple. Forget about why suffering happens. Instead at the depth of our loss ask 'what now?'. What can such a wise and powerful Creator do with our

shattered lives when we trust Him to do so? 'If anyone is in Christ he is a new creature'.(II Cor 5:17) When we 'walk by faith not by sight' (II Cor.5:7) the Creator can get to work on His new purpose for the future.

Job became excited. 'How stupid I have been! Lord, I am sorry. What would you do with me now? I am ready for anything you plan.'(42:1-6) The Lord's attention turned next to Eliphaz and his friends. Their insensitive, wrong teaching had made God angry. They needed His forgiveness which is only possible at the cross of Christ, pictured here, as throughout the Old Testament, by animal sacrifice to Him. God asked Job to pray for his friends and their forgiveness so that Job himself would be able to forgive them. Their future friendship need not be spoiled by the hurt they had caused.(42:7-9)

Now the Creator did what He had waited since the beginning of the book to do. He blessed Job in many ways. First it was through the love of his family who finally gave him the comfort they had not given before. His business of farming was restored and multiplied two fold. He was given 10 more children so his family was restored, though no lost child can ever be replaced. There is every indication that he taught them well for the next 4 generations. This was the real blessing God lavished on Job, the joy of children and grandchildren who shared his love for the Lord.(42:10-17)