

**Job 40:6 – 16, 41:1-5** Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said:<sup>7</sup> “Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me.<sup>8</sup> Will you even put me in the wrong? Will you condemn me that you may be in the right?<sup>9</sup> Have you an arm like God, and can you thunder with a voice like his?<sup>10</sup> “Adorn yourself with majesty and dignity; clothe yourself with glory and splendour.<sup>11</sup> Pour out the overflowings of your anger, and look on everyone who is proud and abase him.<sup>12</sup> Look on everyone who is proud and bring him low and tread down the wicked where they stand.<sup>13</sup> Hide them all in the dust together; bind their faces in the world below.<sup>14</sup> Then will I also acknowledge to you that your own right hand can save you.<sup>15</sup> “Behold, Behemoth, which I made as I made you; he eats grass like an ox.<sup>16</sup> Behold, his strength in his loins, and his power in the muscles of his belly.

**41** “Can you draw out Leviathan with a fish-hook or press down his tongue with a cord?<sup>2</sup> Can you put a rope in his nose or pierce his jaw with a hook? <sup>3</sup> Will he make many pleas to you? Will he speak to you soft words? <sup>4</sup> Will he make a covenant with you to take him for your servant for ever?<sup>5</sup> Will you play with him as with a bird, or will you put him on a leash for your girls? **NB** See p4 for the full reading

Throughout the centuries people have wrestled with the question of why bad things happen to good people. Underlying this is the profound problem of evil in God’s universe. If the universe was created and is governed by a good and loving God, why is there so much pain and suffering? People have sought to explain this in a number of different ways.

- a) God is finite and, though good and loving, he is not all-powerful to deal with evil.
- b) There is no God, and all that happens is by chance. Suffering and pain are just ‘bad luck’ (Atheism)
- c) Job’s conclusion is that God is all-powerful and could stop the suffering. As he didn’t do so, that must mean God is unjust and unloving. Job’s view of God is utterly scary for him and for us (**23:15** see p4).

All of these explanations are deeply unsatisfactory. Human reason will always fail to answer this problem.

#### **What we need is for God to speak into this problem**

God is being accused by Job. He is condemning God in order to justify himself. (**40:8** above). Humanity has done this over and over again, in the search for an answer to the problem of evil. We have placed ourselves above God and acted as his judge, though we may not even realise we are doing it. We might think or say ‘If I were God, I would stop evil, act justly and not allow people I love to suffer’. If we are going to put God in the dock, it is only right to listen to what he has to say about the governance of his universe. God asks three questions of Job (and of us) that we must answer honestly. We have to answer these questions because that is what God commands, so we cannot ignore them.

#### **Dress for action...I will question you and you make it known to me (40:7 above)**

- 1) **Can you and I bring evil people to judgement? (40:9 above).** God is asking Job if he has the power of God to deal justly with evil people. He invites Job to take God’s place as judge of the universe to see if he (Job) can do a better job. (**40:10-13** above). God’s question to Job and to us is

#### **Are we able to sit in the judge’s seat and bring the proud and the wicked down, taking their lives from them and putting them in hell?**

The answer is obviously no!

- We can rage against the evil in our world but we are powerless to stop it or to bring to justice those who act in evil ways. We might rage against God and say ‘If I were God, I would do something about it, but we are not God and we cannot do anything.

**Is God all-powerful and just, so that he can and will bring people to their final judgement, or is he the unsatisfactory god people so often think he is?**

- 2) **Can you and I satisfy the hunger of death? (40:15 ff see p4)** Behemoth represents death. God tells us of the

strength of this beast in **vv 16-18** (see p4) The powerful creature is equally at home on the land or in water (**vv19-23** see p4). He is always eating, as an ox does, and is never satisfied. This is a description of death, which takes and takes but is never satisfied. God's question to Job (and to us) in **v24** (see p4) is

**Can you or I tame death and stop it feeding?**

The answer is obviously no! Death comes to us all and we cannot stop it.

- We might rage against this enemy of humanity but we are powerless against death

**Is God all-powerful and able to deal with death or is he finite and limited, and thus unable to stop the Behemoth?**

**3) Can you and I control Satan? (Ch41 above and p4).** Leviathan is Satan (**41:34** see p4). The **sons of pride** is a description of those who oppose God and set themselves up against him. Leviathan is mentioned in the book of Isaiah and in the Psalms as a serpent opposed to God. In **Job 41**, he is described as a terrifying, fire-breathing, dragon-like creature. He has immense strength (**41:22-23, 26-29** see p4). This is the same Satan who appeared at the start of the book of Job and incited God to act against Job. God's question to Job and to us (**41:1-4**) is

**Can you tame the devil, making him your servant who will bow down to you and obey you?**

The answer is obviously no! Satan is real. He has great power and is opposed to God. He is behind the evil in the world and rules over the sons of pride.

- We, in our own strength, do not have power to control Satan.

**Is God all-powerful and able to set limits on Satan, or is he finite and limited and thus unable to stop this Leviathan?**

When we try to sit in judgement over God, he questions us in order to see if we have the power to sit in judgement over him.

- Do we have the power to deal justly with evil people, satisfy the hunger of death and control Satan?

The answer is obviously no! Therefore we are in no position to put God in the dock and accuse him of weakness or injustice. We have to say with Job:

**I lay my hand on my mouth. (40:4b)**

Throughout all that God speaks to Job, he is showing us the complexity of the universe. It is a world where we see good things, with order and stunning beauty. Yet at the same time, we see evil, ugliness and disorder.

**It is an amazing world that, in its present form, is not designed by God to prevent suffering.**

It is a powerful universe that can work for good and for evil. As examples:

- The wind can both destroy and be harnessed to generate electricity
- Radiation can be used both to make bombs and to treat cancer

That is the complexity of it, and we cannot govern it, though we like to think we can. If we cannot govern it, then who can and who does? How does God answer when we ask the same three questions of him?

**1. Can God bring evil people to judgement?** God says of himself: **Have you an arm like God, and can you thunder with a voice like his? (40:9).**

- God's arm is mighty and his voice is like thunder. He thunders his judgements over evil people and with his strong arm brings them down to hell.

**2. Can God satisfy the hunger of death?** God says of Behemoth (death): **He is the first of the works of God: let him who made him bring near his sword (40:19)**

- God made death and God alone can destroy it.

**3. Can God control Satan and evil?** God says: **Who then is he who can stand before me? Who has first given to me, that I should repay him? Whatever is under the whole heaven is mine (41:10-11).**

- Satan and his hordes of demons are under the under the sovereign control of God. Satan could not do more against Job than God permitted him to do (**1:12, 2:6** see p4)

God is **not** limited in his power. He **is** all-powerful and can limit evil in the world. He can use evil to accomplish his purposes and stop evil anytime he wishes. In the light of this, Job's response to God's questions is:

**I know that you can do all things and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted (42:2)**

God answers the question of why bad things happen to good people by showing us that:

- He cares deeply about his creation, giving every good thing to sustain it (as we saw earlier in the series)
- He sovereignly rules over evil people, death and Satan

God does not give us a direct answer to the problem of evil. Instead, God shows us his own character and then asks:

**Will you trust me even though you don't know why I am taking you through this dark suffering?**

This may not be the answer you were hoping for but:

- **it is more comforting to have a God who rules over evil.** If your view of God is that he is limited and finite, you are left with a god who may wish to do you good, but is powerless to stop evil people, death and Satan doing whatever they like to you. In contrast, a God who loves us and who exercises sovereign rule over those enemies, turning their evil schemes around for our good, is a God in whom we can take comfort.

**Our lives are not at the mercy of Satan who hates us,**

**but are in the hands of a sovereign God who loves us and works for our good.**

- **it is more comforting to have a God who has defeated evil.** The story of the Bible is the story of how God defeated sin, death and Satan. (**Hebrews2:14-15** see p4). God asked Job: **Will you condemn me that you may be in the right? (40:8)**

2000 years ago, that is what happened. God, in the person of his Son (the Lord Jesus Christ) was condemned to death on a cross so that sinful people could be justified, securing forgiveness from sin for those who trust in him. His death involved all three enemies. Evil people conspired against him, Leviathan (Satan) worked in their hearts to destroy him and Behemoth (death) claimed him.

**His death was the way he defeated all of them.**

Death could not keep him. He was raised to life again. Sin, death and Satan have been defeated by Jesus and now can have no ultimate power over us. That same victorious Jesus lives in us and is at work in us.

- By defeating Satan, Jesus has delivered us from him. We don't need to fall to his temptations but are free to love and obey Jesus.
- By defeating death for us, Jesus secures our resurrection. The grave won't have the last word over our lives.
- By defeating evil people, Jesus assures us that, whatever they do to us now, on day God will judge them. That frees us from the need to take revenge, so we can love that person by praying for them.

God asks us: **Will you trust me even though you don't know why I am taking you through this dark suffering?**

**We are powerless to change the suffering that comes upon us,**

**but we are not powerless to trust the God who rules over the dark forces behind it.**

**Full reading:**

**40:6-24** Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said:<sup>7</sup> “Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me.<sup>8</sup> Will you even put me in the wrong? Will you condemn me that you may be in the right?<sup>9</sup> Have you an arm like God, and can you thunder with a voice like his?<sup>10</sup> “Adorn yourself with majesty and dignity; clothe yourself with glory and splendour.<sup>11</sup> Pour out the overflowings of your anger, and look on everyone who is proud and abase him.<sup>12</sup> Look on everyone who is proud and bring him low and tread down the wicked where they stand.<sup>13</sup> Hide them all in the dust together; bind their faces in the world below.<sup>14</sup> Then will I also acknowledge to you that your own right hand can save you.<sup>15</sup> “Behold, Behemoth, which I made as I made you; he eats grass like an ox.<sup>16</sup> Behold, his strength in his loins, and his power in the muscles of his belly.<sup>17</sup> He makes his tail stiff like a cedar; the sinews of his thighs are knit together.<sup>18</sup> His bones are tubes of bronze, his limbs like bars of iron.<sup>19</sup> “He is the first of the works of God; let him who made him bring near his sword!<sup>20</sup> For the mountains yield food for him where all the wild beasts play.<sup>21</sup> Under the lotus plants he lies, in the shelter of the reeds and in the marsh.<sup>22</sup> For his shade the lotus trees cover him; the willows of the brook surround him.<sup>23</sup> Behold, if the river is turbulent he is not frightened; he is confident though Jordan rushes against his mouth.<sup>24</sup> Can one take him by his eyes, or pierce his nose with a snare?

**41: 1-11** “Can you draw out Leviathan with a fish-hook or press down his tongue with a cord?<sup>2</sup> Can you put a rope in his nose or pierce his jaw with a hook? <sup>3</sup> Will he make many pleas to you? Will he speak to you soft words? <sup>4</sup> Will he make a covenant with you to take him for your servant for ever?<sup>5</sup> Will you play with him as with a bird, or will you put him on a leash for your girls? <sup>6</sup> Will traders bargain over him? Will they divide him up among the merchants? <sup>7</sup> Can you fill his skin with harpoons or his head with fishing spears? <sup>8</sup> Lay your hands on him; remember the battle—you will not do it again!<sup>9</sup> Behold, the hope of a man is false; he is laid low even at the sight of him.<sup>10</sup> No one is so fierce that he dares to stir him up. Who then is he who can stand before me? <sup>11</sup> Who has first given to me, that I should repay him? Whatever is under the whole heaven is mine.

**23:15** Therefore I am terrified at his presence; when I consider, I am in dread of him.

**41:34** He sees everything that is high; he is king over all the sons of pride.”

**41:22-23** In his neck abides strength, and terror dances before him.<sup>23</sup> The folds of his flesh stick together, firmly cast on him and immovable.

**41: 26-29** Though the sword reaches him, it does not avail, nor the spear, the dart, or the javelin.<sup>27</sup> He counts iron as straw, and bronze as rotten wood.<sup>28</sup> The arrow cannot make him flee; for him sling stones are turned to stubble.<sup>29</sup> Clubs are counted as stubble; he laughs at the rattle of javelins.

**1: 12** And the LORD said to Satan, “Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand.”

**2:6** And the LORD said to Satan, “Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life.”

**Hebrews2:14-15** <sup>14</sup> Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, <sup>15</sup> and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.