

Job's Monsters (Job 40:15-41:34)

Big Idea: We face supernatural danger, but these evil supernatural forces are no match for God.

We're zooming through the Bible this year. So far we've covered Genesis and Job, and we're not even out of January yet.

Once in a while, though, we'll have a chance to slow down a bit and linger a little. And I thought that today's passage may be a good place to stop for a couple of reasons:

- First, because the passage is so unusual.
- Second, because I think this passage is so relevant to our lives.

What am I talking about? I'm talking about the two monsters mentioned in the book of Job.

Just a bit of background. Job is a book about a righteous man who suffered. In a very short time, he lost completely everything. Last week we looked at the story. If you weren't here, I'd encourage you to go back and read or watch the sermon, because the message of the book is so relevant to our lives. Here's a summary of what we said: You are going to suffer. You may not be able to understand it, and you should be careful about how to explain it. But you can trust God because God is good and powerful.

Near the end of Job, God shows up. God never answers Job's questions about why he suffers, but he does something even more remarkable: he reveals himself. And

when Job sees God's glory, he realizes that's enough. God asks over 50 questions. He demonstrates his understanding of and control over the universe, and, in contrast, how little Job (and we) know. Job realizes that he's small and that God is both powerful and good. God opens Job's eyes to see some of the bigger picture, and when Job sees God for who he is, that's enough. What we need even more than answers is the very presence of God.

But today I want to pause, because when God addresses Job, he talks about two strange animals. God spends a lot of time talking about them.

One is Behemoth.

*Behold, Behemoth,
which I made as I made you;
he eats grass like an ox.
Behold, his strength in his loins,
and his power in the muscles of his belly.
He makes his tail stiff like a cedar;
the sinews of his thighs are knit together.
His bones are tubes of bronze,
his limbs like bars of iron.
(40:15-18)*

The other is Leviathan.

*Can you draw out Leviathan with a fishhook
or press down his tongue with a cord?
Can you put a rope in his nose
or pierce his jaw with a hook?*

Will he make many pleas to you?

Will he speak to you soft words?

(Job 41:1-3)

For a chapter and a half, God speaks about these two animals.

God speaks in Job 38 to 41. That's it. Two speeches. Four chapters. 127 verses. For a third of that time, God speaks about these two animals. What's even more striking is Job's reaction to God's teaching on these animals. It seems to be what changes his perspective. After God finishes talking about Leviathan, Job says:

I know that you can do all things,

and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?'

Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand,

things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.

(Job 42:2-3)

These two animals seem to be the clincher for Job.

So let's ask ourselves: what do these animals have to teach us today?

Two things:

We face supernatural danger.

Here's the place to begin: what are these animals? One common interpretation is that they're the hippopotamus and crocodile. Certainly those are fascinating creatures. The hippo is one of the largest land mammals – between 3,000 and 9,000 pounds – and is

considered to be extremely aggressive. The hippopotamus is the world's deadliest land mammal. They kill roughly 500 people every year, which is twice as many as lions kill and almost 20 times as many as cougars kill.

And then you've got the crocodile. Crocs grow up to 20 feet (six meters) in length and take down a hippo. They have the strongest bite measured and kill 1,000 people a year.

So these beasts are scary. But we have good reason to believe that God could be talking about something far scarier than the hippo and crocodile. One Bible scholar (Eric Ortlund) translates behemoth as superbeast, far more than an ordinary hippo. Leviathan is often used in Scripture to refer to a supernatural chaos monster.

So what we're talking about here is probably not any ordinary animals, but symbols of chaos that rage against God.

I want you to look at Leviathan for a moment, because everything about him is terrifying to humans. He's well-armored. He's powerful. His attack is lethal. Look at his scaly hide and fiery breath. Chapter 41 is the stuff of nightmares. God does really paint a terrifying picture.

Let's pause here for a moment.

What God is saying is that there are forces in the world that are powerful and scary, and we can't handle them. I guarantee you that, as a child, you were terrified of monsters at some point in your life. Somebody came along and told you, "Don't be silly. There is no such thing as monsters." It didn't help right away, but eventually you probably stopped being scared of monsters.

And then God comes along in the book of Job and says:

Lay your hands on him;

remember the battle—you will not do it again!

*Behold, the hope of a man is false;
he is laid low even at the sight of him.
No one is so fierce that he dares to stir him up.
(Job 41:8-10)*

What God does in this passage is remind Job – and us – that there are forces that are more powerful than us. There are supernatural forces in this world that we cannot control.

This is key to understanding the Bible as we work through it this year. It's key to understanding our lives. In Genesis 3, we're introduced to this serpent. In Genesis 3:15, God curses the serpent and announces that a state of war is going to exist between the serpent and the seed of the woman. This explains so much of life. We're at war against a force much greater than us. That explains so much of why life is hard, why so many evil things seem to happen to us.

In the novel *No Country for Old Men*, one of the characters says, "Satan explains a lot of things that otherwise don't have no explanation." That is so true. Job's suffering made a lot more sense, the Bible's story makes a lot more sense, and your life will make a lot more sense if you understand the reality of supernatural forces that are much bigger than us.

Do you wonder why this world is such a mess? These chapters tell us. We face enemies that are much bigger and more powerful than we are.

Do you wonder why bad things happen? Not because God has forgotten about you, and not necessarily because God is angry at you. It's because enemies are on the loose that love to bring chaos and evil into the world. Eric Ortlund [writes](#), "God un-masks Job's real enemy, and his own. Imagine what relief would have flooded Job's heart as he realized that all his wild fears about God being irrationally angry with him,

all his heartache over his apparently lost friendship with God, were all entirely mistaken—his suffering did not mean God was angry!”

Do you wonder why you wake up to such chaos sometimes? Years ago, I read these words from Charles Spurgeon, and they’ve stuck with me: “When you sleep, think that you are resting on the battlefield; when you walk, suspect an ambush in every hedge.”

Do you wonder if God understands? Yes, God is very aware of what behemoth and leviathan have been up to in Job’s life. In fact, he understands more than Job does.

We face supernatural danger that is much bigger than us. Life will make a lot more sense when we realize that.

But here’s the second thing this passage teaches us.

These evil supernatural forces are no match for God.

Chapters 40 and 41 spend quite a bit of time talking about how these two monsters are unbeatable. Nobody can really stand against them. So far this sermon hasn’t been too encouraging. It explains a lot about the world, but it doesn’t give us much hope. We face evil forces opposed to us. They’re powerful, dangerous, and we can’t do anything about them.

But then look at 40:19, speaking of behemoth:

*He is the first of the works of God;
let him who made him bring near his sword!*

Two things about behemoth.

First, even this evil supernatural force is made by God. In other words, it is a creature, not creator. It is not equal to God; it is subject to God. It may rank highly in God's creation, but it's still a creature. As you read these chapters, you can't help but feel some panic yourself at the power of these creatures, but notice that there is no sense of panic in what God says.

Second, God the creator is ready to bring his sword to deal with behemoth. "Let him who made him bring near his sword." Job is unable to deal with behemoth and leviathan. They've completely ruined his life. But God is prepared to deal with them. God is prepared to deal with all the evil in the world.

I love how Christopher Ash puts it:

Even Satan, the Leviathan, is God's Satan, God's pet, if we dare to put it like this. This means that as we suffer . . . we may with absolute confidence bow down to this sovereign God, knowing that while evil may be terrible, it cannot and will not ever go one tiny fraction beyond the leash on which God has put it. And it will not go on forever.

Friends, we live in a world in which chaos is on the loose. There is massive, supernatural evil at work in this world, and we're mostly unaware of it. But God isn't. And this gives us hope, even when we suffer.

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Eric Ortlund puts it this way. It's as if God turns to Job and says, "Look at that, Job! Those scales, those huge sharp teeth, the bursting flames from his mouth - what an opponent! I cannot wait for the day when I draw my sword and finally destroy him for ever!" That's exactly what God did through Jesus at the cross. And one day we will wit-

ness the end of this opponent's reign of terror. The question is whether we'll trust him in the meantime.

Job does. He says:

*I know that you can do all things,
and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted....*

*I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear,
but now my eye sees you;
therefore I despise myself,
and repent in dust and ashes.*

(Job 42:2, 5-6)

I hope we do too.

Lord, thank you for explaining so clearly what's wrong with our world. Thank you for showing us the reality of what we're up against.

And thank you for showing us that, even now, you hold these monsters on a leash, that Satan is not your equal but is under you. Thank you that Jesus in his ministry could say, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (Luke 10:18). Thank you for what Colossians 2:15 says: that at the cross, Jesus "disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him." Thank you that we don't have to fear the evil one. Thank you that we can put on the whole armor of God, that we may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil (Ephesians 6:11). Thank you that the God of peace will soon crush Satan under our feet (Romans 16:20).

Our prayer is that, like Job, these realities would cause us to trust you even in the middle of suffering. Help us to do so. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.