

To the Zoo and Back

When God Speaks – Part IV

Job 38:39 – 40:5

Introduction

It has been fascinating to watch our female beagle, Patches, care for her puppy. She had one puppy eight weeks ago – only one. She was not supposed to have any. She did not ask permission or anything. It had been nearly five years since her last litter – she is actually fifty-six years old in human years. We thought we were out of the woods, so to speak.

We also did not have many neighbors around, as we were among the first to build in what used to be the country. But neighbors moved into our cul-de-sac with a grey male Schnauzer – obviously unconverted and definitely not sanctified. What we were afraid of happened – and Patches delivered one puppy. My daughter named this hyperactive ball of grey and brown fur Pixie.

It has been amazing to watch. The puppy was born with the instinct to nurse and, even though she was born with her eyes shut, she could smell her way to dinner. But wouldn't you know it – because we have so much time on our hands at the Davey household, the mother dog, who is too old to have puppies – and because there were no dogs around and therefore no reason to get her spayed, I did not spend the money to do so – had a puppy. And, because she is older, there were problems.

In the last few weeks, three times a day, my wife would use a bottle and a big plastic syringe to try to get as much milk into this puppy as she could, while Patches recovered from an infection that resulted in not having enough milk. Sometimes my daughter helped, and sometimes I even volunteered – and my shirt front and sleeves would be wet from the milk as

the puppy, who never caught on to the bottle and just wanted to chew on the syringe, got as much milk on the outside of her as on the inside.

I have scoffed at people spending any money on their dogs beyond a rabies shot – but now, it is different. My wife and daughter are saying to me, “There's something wrong with Patches and Pixie.”

My answer has been, “They'll work it out.”

However, my wife and daughter were right. Now, we have medical payments and computer files at PetSmart. The last time I was there, I could see on the computer screen “Pixie Davey”. She is not a Davey!

It has been amazing though, to observe the instinctive abilities of our female dog and even those of the puppy, who somehow knows how to act like a dog – sniffing and scratching. The other day the puppy went to the bathroom in the neighbor's yard – training is paying off – and she pushed dirt behind her with her back paws as she ran off. What amazing instinct.

Just to let you know – both dogs are okay now. Pixie is growing like a weed – and eating regular dog food. In fact, I just moved the dogs to the back yard, where they are going to live happily ever after.

Everything about these dogs – their amazing instincts; their behavioral patterns – is a result of DNA which was designed for their kind and implanted by Creator God.

One of the most devastating discoveries to the theory of evolution was this code of information called DNA. We now know that the DNA code

contains the information that enables the organism to reproduce, preserve, and repair itself.

One author wrote,

The genetic structure of every living organism limits that organism to what it is – no more, and no less. . . .

Charles Darwin accepted the middle 1800s theory that variations caused by the environment could be passed on and inherited by the young. Darwin used this theory to further postulate that one creature could change into the species of another over time. He even explained the origin of the giraffe's long neck in part, "through the inherited effects of the increased use of parts." In other words, in seasons of limited food supply, Darwin reasoned, giraffes would stretch their necks for the high leaves, supposedly resulting in longer necks being passed on to their offspring.ⁱ

This is the theory we hear over and over again on such shows as *Animal Planet* and on the Disney channel. We hear that animals do what they do because they have inherited, over millions of years, their abilities to survive. They are so much smarter now because they have inherited millions of years of knowledge and behavior.

This author goes on to write,

Modern genetics has utterly disproved this hypothesis; the length of a giraffe's neck is determined by its genetic code . . . the genetic structure of every living organism limits that organism to what it is – no more and no less.ⁱⁱ

All of which causes the believer to marvel at the creative ingenuity and variety of Creator God.

Creator God is the One we believe, according to Genesis chapter 1, on days five and six of creation, spoke and the earth and seas and skies were immediately teeming with fish and birds and creatures, large and small. All of them were functioning according to the design God had for each of their kind.

God has already taken Job on a tour of the heavens – the constellations, planets, earth, water, and sky. He now shifts and effectively takes Job to the zoo and back.

God rehearses to this suffering man, His care over creation – from the small to the great. The implicit message is that if He will take care of mortal

creatures, how much more will He care for immortal mankind.

“Job, you’re wondering if I care about you and if I have plans for whatever happens in your life. You’re wondering if I have taken note of your suffering. Let Me answer this by taking you to the zoo and back. Let Me show you one animal after another – some amazing; some ordinary. Let Me let you marvel over My creative design and come to understand afresh, My care and providence over you.”

So, God will, at the end of Job chapter 38, reintroduce Job to some animals. Some of them pounce, some soar in the sky; some live in the mountains, some in the deserts; some run at high speeds, some fly to mountain hideaways.

The Creativity of God

1. First, God brings to mind a strong animal.

Look at Job 38:39.

Can you hunt the prey for the lion, or satisfy the appetite of the young lions,

The truth is that we do not want anything to do with lions, right?! Frankly, we do not care if they never eat again.

However, God does and has designed in them the ability to, as Job 38:40 reminds us,

. . . crouch in their dens and lie in wait in their lair?

Pull out an encyclopedia some time and look up lions. The average lion weighs up to 600 pounds and stands four feet high. I have been within a few feet of lions, while safely tucked inside a Jeep on an African reserve a few years ago. They were massive as they walked by the Jeep and the top of their backs reached the bottom of my window ledge. Even though the windows were rolled up, we could hear them purring – and they sounded like an idling engine.

Job had no ability or desire to care for these frightening predators. But God was and is the lion tamer.

2. Secondly, God moves from the strong animal to the skittish.

Notice Job 38:41.

Who prepares for the raven its nourishment when its young cry to God and wander about without food?

Of all the birds God would bring to Job’s attention, the first one we would have chosen would

not have been the raven. These large black birds with their unpleasant caw do not seem to benefit mankind on any level. They eat anything, including decomposing flesh, and have been known to hunt with wolves and eat the remains that are left over.

There is no doubt that Job had seen ravens eating the remains of dead animals.

It is as if God wanted Job to know that He cares for even the ravens and their young. God hears when they cry out, He says, as if they are crying out to Him.

Even the undesirable, unpleasant, unattractive birds are known and cared for by God's providence.

"How much more, Job, will I care for you?"

By the way, this was the message of Jesus Christ, who said,

Are not five sparrows sold for two cents? Yet not one of them is forgotten before God. (Luke 12:6)

In other words, not even the small sacrificial sparrow is outside the providence of God.

Then Christ concluded by saying to His audience,
. . . you are more valuable than many sparrows. (Luke 12:7b)

This is a message that is lost in our culture, which is to be expected. As the Creator is denied, animals and created beings are elevated and given equal status with human beings. In our own generation, we are watching the giving to animals of human rights and equal status with mankind. Confusion is at an incredible level. One of the fastest growing branches of law in America is animal or pet law.

This is the animal kingdom which the resurrected Christ will tell Peter to,

. . . kill and eat [and enjoy] (Acts 10:13)

It is now considered more valuable than mankind and should no longer be properly used to enhance and sustain human life.

Today, we cannot crush the egg of an eagle without severe penalty, but we can crush the embryo of a human being – kill it and, according to most politicians, be able to use its stem cells for experimentation. I call this a tragic reversal of human rights.

Listen to what would be a radical message today, coming from the lips of Jesus Christ, as recorded in Matthew 6:26,

Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. . . .

In other words, God cares about them. But then, Christ goes on to say,

. . . Are you not worth much more than they?

Christ would not be invited to appear on *Oprah*. His message is way too radically right.

Jesus' point was that the care and arrangement by the Father for the animal kingdom is intended as an encouraging illustration of the amazing care and arrangement of the Father for His highest creation – mankind.

3. Thirdly, God moves with Job's memory from the strong to the skittish and now, continues to the shy animal.

Notice Job 39:1-2.

Do you know the time the mountain goats give birth? Do you observe the calving of the deer?

Can you count the months they fulfill, or do you know the time they give birth?

The obvious answer is, "No" – to all the above.

These animals stay hidden during the day – they come out at night along Yates Mill Pond Road. As I pull down the driveway through a cluster of trees where my mother-in-law lives, it is not unusual to see three or four deer racing for the woods.

"Job, I see them at all times – their ways are not hidden from Me."

4. Fourthly, God moves on from the shy animal to the stubborn.

Look at Job 39:5-7.

Who sent out the wild donkey free? And who loosed the bonds of the swift donkey,

to whom I gave the wilderness for a home and the salt land for his dwelling place?

He scorns the tumult of the city, the shoutings of the driver he does not hear.

He explores the mountains for his pasture and searches after every green thing.

"Job, has the donkey ever asked you for permission to roam? Have you told it where to live?"ⁱⁱⁱ

No, the truth is, we can hardly tell a donkey anything, right? “The shoutings of the driver he does not hear.”

“But I, the Creator, have determined its habitat. I have told it where to live.”

What a lesson for Job . . . that God not only assigned the habitat for the wild donkey, He assigns the habitat for His sons and daughters.^{iv}

Imagine – God not only created you for a place in life, but He created a place in life for you.

If God has something to say about the place where an ordinary donkey will live, He has something to say about the place where you and I now live.

God is implying to Job, “I have determined your habitat, right now, and it has only come about by My permission and providence.”

5. Fifthly, God moves from the strong and the skittish and the shy and the stubborn to the sturdy animal.

Notice Job 39:9-12.

*Will the wild ox consent to serve you,
or will he spend the night at your manger
[barn]?*

*Can you bind the wild ox in a furrow
with ropes, or will he harrow the valleys
after you?*

*Will you trust him because his strength
is great and leave your labor to him?*

*Will you have faith in him that he will
return your grain and gather it from your
threshing floor?*

This animal is not the oxen we might imagine in front of some plow. It is translated “unicorn” in the Authorized Version, but even this animal is not a pretty horse with a pointed horn.

Most Old Testament scholars believe this animal is now extinct and was the animal known as the “aurochs,” which inhabited the Middle East for centuries.

The bull aurochs was more than six feet wide at the shoulders and had long horns pointing forward. Imagine a Texas steer the size of a rhinoceros as a good mental image of the aurochs.

In Psalm 22:11-12, David asks to be delivered from the horns of this animal.

Extinct since 1627, this enormous animal was considered to be the most powerful of all hoofed beasts – hunted in the past by the Assyrians.^v

I found it interesting that the Egyptian Pharaoh Thutmose III, who reigned 1500 years before the birth of Christ, once boasted of killing seventy-five aurochs in a single hunt.^{vi}

This animal sounds like one in a Tolkien novel, does it not? It actually is in his novels – a fascinating, powerful creature.

These were not domesticated oxen that Job would have used in his fields. These were wild animals that could kill a man in a dozen different ways.

God asks the question, “Job, do you think you can tame an aurochs? Can you hitch him up to your plow?”

The answer is an obvious, “No.”

God is implying to Job, “If I can direct the wild donkey and tame the aurochs and any other wild animal in My creation, then I just might be able to control the wild chaos that has come into your life.”

To those who do not believe God was answering Job – oh He was, in the rich analogies of His created world.

6. Sixthly, God now moves from the sturdy animal to the strange.

God stops asking questions for a moment in this trip to the zoo, and simply makes statements. He speaks in Job 39:13-17.

*The ostriches’ wings flap joyously with
the pinion and plumage of love,*

*For she abandons her eggs to the earth
and warms them in the dust,*

*and she forgets that a foot may crush
them, or that a wild beast may trample
them.*

*She treats her young cruelly, as if they
were not hers; though her labor be in vain,
she is unconcerned;*

*because God has made her forget
wisdom, and has not given her a share of
understanding.*

In other words, God made her less than the brightest animal on the planet!

What an odd bird. In fact, it is the largest living bird, weighing up to 300 pounds and reaching a height of eight feet. It is the only bird with eyelashes. It has wings, but it cannot fly. As a result, the female builds her nest in the sand.

The comment in verse 16 that “she treats her young cruelly, as if they were not hers” is a reference

to the fact that before the female ostrich buries her eggs in a shallow hole in the sand, usually dug by the male, she keeps some of the eggs out of the nest to be used as food for the chicks that hatch.

Her basic ignorance and lack of qualities were legendary among the Middle Eastern world.

In fact, Pliny, the first century Roman naturalist and author, was among the first to write of the ostrich hiding its head and neck in a bush, thinking it was safe because it could see nothing.

This led to the cartoon of an ostrich that we often see, in which the ostrich has its head buried in the sand, thinking that it is now safe from predators.

But notice, however, for all her ignorance, she is exhilarating to watch run. Job 39:18 records,

When she lifts herself on high [to run], she laughs at the horse and his rider.

In other words, one thing the ostrich can do better than most animals is run. Only a handful of animals on the planet can run faster than an ostrich, that clocks in around forty miles per hour. Lifting her head, extending her small wings for balance, she takes off running and reaches a maximum speed of forty miles per hour – taking giant strides of up to fifteen feet while running.

Here she comes. As she races by, we realize one foot was planted in the brass section, the next planted here by the pulpit, and the next planted there by the tympani – three steps and she has spanned the length of this stage.^{vii}

I think it is fascinating that God took Job to see the ostrich. The ostrich is one of God's ways of saying, "I create stuff you'd never even conceive of creating – stuff that doesn't make any sense!"

We go to the zoo and look at an ostrich and are left with a chuckle and smile. We are saying to ourselves because we would never say it out loud, "What in the world was God thinking when He created that?"

There are times in our lives when we are left wondering the same thing about our own lives – and we fear to utter the words out loud, but we are confused and wonder secretly in our hearts, "Lord, what were You thinking? What sense can I make of what You've created in my life?! It doesn't add up!"

There are creations that go under the categorical heading of "strange" – and we agree with the Lord,

For My thoughts are [obviously] not your thoughts, nor [obviously] are your ways My ways . . . (Isaiah 55:8)

7. Seventh, God moves from the strangeness of the ostrich to describe the stateliness of the horse.

Look at Job 39:19-25.

Do you give the horse his might? Do you clothe his neck with a mane?

Do you make him leap like the locust? His majestic snorting is terrible.

He paws in the valley, and rejoices in his strength; he goes out to meet the weapons.

He laughs at fear and is not dismayed; and he does not turn back from the sword.

The quiver rattles against him, the flashing spear and javelin.

With shaking and rage he races over the ground, and he does not stand still at the voice of the trumpet.

As often as the trumpet sounds he says, "Aha!" and he scents the battle from afar, and the thunder of the captains and the war cry.

"Job, you might be able to train a battle horse, but who gave him his eagerness to fight? Who made him race into enemy forces? Who allowed him to smell war and swallow up the ground in a race to get there first?"

"The horse's majesty, energy, strength, impatience for the battle, and spirit are proofs of the greatness of Him who had made him."^{viii}

Perhaps this is the subtle hint to Job not to run from the battle; to face the war he is in and stand firm.

Just as the horse is courageous in the face of conflict, the implication, one author wrote, was that God could also make Job confident as he faced his devastating trials.

"I have mantled and bred and infused the horse for everything it needs to face the battle. If I can do that to a horse, Job, I can strengthen you to stand the tests and battles of life."

We have been told the same – with clear revelation. We have been:

- thoroughly equipped for every good work (II Timothy 3:17);
- given the full armor of God, so that we will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything to stand firm (Ephesians 6:13);

- given by God's divine power everything pertaining to life and godliness (II Peter 1:3).

We are empowered, equipped and outfitted for life.

If God would bother to equip a regal horse for battle, how much more will He equip us who are the sons and daughters of the King?

This trip to the zoo and back is almost over. God has one more stop along the way.

8. God has reviewed the strong, the skittish, the shy, the stubborn, the sturdy, the strange, the stately, and now, He describes the stunning animal.

God gives one more look at some amazing birds – the hawk, with its built-in migratory system, and the eagle, with its soaring heights and amazing sight. Let us look for a moment at the eagle. Notice Job 39:27-29.

Is it at your command that the eagle mounts up and makes his nest on high?

On the cliff he dwells and lodges, upon the rocky crag, an inaccessible place.

From here he spies out food; his eyes see it from afar.

I have read that an eagle's eye has eight times as many visual cells per cubic centimeter than a human eye. I do not have any idea what that means, but it sounds like a lot.

What I do understand is that an eagle, flying at 600 feet elevation, can watch a spider crawl across our driveways. An eagle can see fish the size of our hands jumping in a lake five miles away.

I cannot see my computer screen five feet away.

It can see fish jumping five miles away. Evolutionists would say the eagle developed this eyesight because it made its nests so high up. God gave the eagle this eyesight because it would make its nests so high up.

The Accountability of Mankind

God created the ostrich to put its eggs in the sand. God created the eagle to put its eggs on the side of a mountain side and fly high.

The diversity of creation shows the diversity of God's creative ability.

Much more, however, God's creative ability indicates the accountability of mankind. Even in this text, God ends this part of the field trip to the zoo with accountability.

Notice Job 40:1-2.

Then the Lord said to Job,

“Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty? Let him who reproves God answer it.”

Several times in the earlier chapters Job wanted an audience with God. He wanted to make his case. He wanted to contend with his adversary in a court of law.

“All right, Job, this is your day in court! What do you have to say now?”

Look at Job 40:3-4.

Then Job answered the Lord and said,

“Behold, I am insignificant; what can I reply to You? I lay my hand on my mouth.”

This is an expression of reverence.

In other words, “I have nothing to say. I thought I had found a legal angle to argue with You.”

I came across this interesting account of a lawyer who thought he had found a clever way to get a “leg up” in court. In fact, this true story won the Criminal Lawyers Award Contest a few years ago. Charles Swindoll recorded this account in his commentary on Job at the point in which Job responds to God. The article reads as follows:

A Charlotte, North Carolina, lawyer purchased a box of very rare and expensive cigars, and then insured them against fire, among other things. Within a month, having smoked his entire stockpile of twenty-four cigars, the lawyer filed claim against the insurance company. In his claim, the lawyer stated the cigars were lost “in a series of small fires.”

The insurance company refused to pay, citing the obvious reason: that the man had consumed the cigars himself – an insurance claim against fire damage cannot mean the same thing as the fire whereby he himself had consumed the cigars. The court sided with the lawyer and he actually won.

In delivering the ruling the judge agreed with the insurance company that the claim was frivolous. The judge stated, nevertheless, the lawyer held a policy from the company in which it had warranted that the cigars were insurable and also guaranteed that it would insure them against fire, without defining what is considered to be unacceptable fire, and thus were obligated to pay the claim.

[To the surprise of everyone,] the insurance company accepted the ruling and paid \$15,000 to the lawyer for his loss of the twenty-four cigars lost in

the “fires”. The lawyer was rather proud of himself in his clever deed.

(Now let us hear the best part.)

After the lawyer cashed the check, the insurance company had him arrested on twenty-four counts of arson.

With his own testimony used against him, the lawyer was convicted of intentionally setting fire to insured property twenty-four different times and was sentenced to two years in jail and a \$24,000 fine.^{ix}

This lawyer was caught by his own words.

Job is caught by his own testimony. He had rather proudly demanded an audience with God. He had said, in Job 31:35b (paraphrased),

“. . . Let the Almighty answer me! I am waiting – let Him respond to His indictment against me.”

These are brash words, “Let God give me an explanation.”

God showed up.

Job soon realizes he has boxed himself in. He says, in Job 40:5,

Once I have spoken, and I will not answer; even twice, and I will add nothing more.

In other words, “I’ve already said enough. I have nothing further to say or suggest to You.”

Maybe the best time to put our hands over our mouths and stop talking is right now. Let us have no more arguments with God. Let us make no more claims of cleverness.

Let us just be in:

- silence;

- surrender;
- submission.

Closing Observations

Let me close by making two observations from this chapter; this trip to the zoo and back.

1. **First, for the most part, the animal kingdom is beyond our comprehension – but not God’s.**

From the strong to the stately, God comprehends it all. From the skittish to the strange, God has designed every strand of DNA for His purposes and His glory.

2. **Secondly, for the most part, the animal kingdom is not only beyond our comprehension, it is beyond our control – but not God’s.**

Beloved, just as the animal kingdom is not beyond God’s comprehension and not out of God’s control, neither are we.

He has not lost track of us; we have not gone around a bend and caused Him to lose sight of us. God sees us up on the craggy mountain cleft; He sees us with our head stuck in the sand.

Nothing has come into our habitat that was not planned. And even though we might not feel prepared for it, God prepared it for us.

This trip to the zoo and back should leave us like Job – with our hands over our mouths, silenced and submissive to God’s ways.

He who spoke the worlds into existence; He who gave the first word should have the last word in your life and mine, even now.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 11/18/2007 by Stephen Davey.

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ⁱ John MacArthur, The Battle for the Beginning (W Publishing, 2001), p. 134.

ⁱⁱ Ibid., p. 134.

ⁱⁱⁱ John C. L. Gibson, Daily Study Bible: Job (Westminster Press, 1985), p. 233.

^{iv} Steve Lawson, Holman Old Testament Commentary: Job (Holman, 2004), p. 340.

^v Roy Zuck, Job (Moody Press, 1978), p. 171.

^{vi} Derek Thomas, The Storm Breaks: Job Simply Explained (Evangelical Press, 1995), p. 293.

^{vii} Zuck, p. 172.

^{viii} Albert Barnes, Notes on the Book of Job, quoted by Zuck, p. 174.

^{ix} Charles Swindoll, Job: A Man of Heroic Endurance (W Publishing, 2004), p. 281.