

God Doesn't Have Creditors (Job 41:10–11)

Andy Naselli / November 27, 2011

1. How does Job 41:10–11 fit into the book of Job?

1.1. Synopsis of Job

1.1.1. Prologue (Job 1–2)

1.1.2. Job's Lament and Three Cycles of Debates between Job and Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar (Job 3–31)

Job's Lament (Job 3)

Round One (Job 4–14)

Eliphaz's Response (Job 4–5); Job's Response (Job 6–7); Bildad's Response (Job 8);
Job's Response (Job 9–10); Zophar's Response (Job 11); Job's Response (Job 12–14)

Round Two (Job 15–21)

Eliphaz's Response (Job 15); Job's Response (Job 16–17); Bildad's Response (Job 18);
Job's Response (Job 19); Zophar's Response (Job 20); Job's Response (Job 21)

Round Three (Job 22–31)

Eliphaz's Response (Job 22); Job's Response (Job 23–24);
Bildad's Response (Job 25); Job's Response (Job 25–31)

1.1.3. Elihu's Discourse (Job 32–37)

1.1.4. God's Interrogation of Job (Job 38:1–42:6)

God's First Interrogation (Job 38:1–40:2); Job's First Response (Job 40:3–5);
God's Second Interrogation (Job 40:6–41:34); Job's Second Response (Job 42:1–6)

1.1.5. Epilogue (Job 42:7–17)

1.2. The Theological Message of Job

Motifs:

1. The problem of innocent, unexplained suffering
2. Maintaining faith during innocent, unexplained suffering
3. Mystery
4. Refuting retribution theology
5. Putting humans in their place

Theological message: People should respond to innocent, unexplained suffering by trusting God because he is supremely wise, sovereign, just, and good.

1.3. The Argument of Job 38:1–42:6

1.3.1. The Setup for God's Interrogation of Job

1.3.2. God's First Interrogation of Job (Job 38:1–40:5)

1.3.3. God's Second Interrogation of Job (Job 40:6–42:6)

1.3.4. The Significance of God's Interrogation of Job

1. God is too small in Job's eyes.
2. Correspondingly, Job is too large in his own eyes.
3. God is not obligated to give Job anything, not even answers to his questions.
4. Only God is all-wise.

2. What does Job 41:10–11 teach us about God?

2.1. A Lesson on Humility: An Argument from the Lesser to the Greater (Job 41:10)

If Job is to charge God with injustice, he must do so from the secure stance of his own superior justice; and if he cannot subdue these beasts [Behemoth and Leviathan], let alone the cosmic forces they represent, he does not enjoy such a stance, and is therefore displaying extraordinary arrogance to call God's justice into question. . . .

If there are so many things that Job does not understand, why should he so petulantly and persistently demand that he understand his own suffering? *There are some things you will not understand, for you are not God.* (D. A. Carson, *How Long, O Lord*, 152–53)

2.2. A Lesson on Ownership: An Argument from the Greater to the Lesser (Job 41:11)

3. What are some implications of Job 41:10–11?

3.1. Don't try to place God in your debt.

A legalist is anyone who behaves as if they can earn God's forgiveness through personal performance. (C. J. Mahaney, *Living the Cross-Centered Life*, 112)

“Being very, very good” in a legalistic way is a form of idolatry:

Religious people commonly live very moral lives, but their goal is to get leverage over God, to control him, to put him in a position where they think he owes them. Therefore, despite all their ethical fastidiousness and piety, they are actually rebelling against his authority. . . .

Elder brothers [i.e., like the elder brother in the parable of “the prodigal son” in Luke 15] obey God to get things. They don't obey God to get God himself—in order to resemble him, love him, know him, and delight him. . . .

Nearly everyone defines sin as breaking a list of rules. Jesus, though, shows us that a man who has violated virtually nothing on the list of moral misbehaviors can be every bit as spiritually lost as the most profligate, immoral person. Why? Because sin is not just breaking the rules, it is putting yourself in the place of God as Savior, Lord, and Judge

There are two ways to be your own Savior and Lord. One is by breaking all the moral laws and setting your own course, and one is by keeping all the moral laws and being very, very good. (Tim Keller, *The Prodigal God*, 38, 42–44)

Imagining that God owes us something is a form of idolatry:

Job 41:11 is a salutary reminder that we are not independent. Even if God were not the supremely good God he is, we would have no comeback. He owns us; he owns the universe; all the authority is his, all the branches of divine government are his, the ultimate judiciary is his. There is no “outside” place from which to judge him. To pretend otherwise is futile; worse, it is part of our race's rebellion against God—imagining he owes us something, imagining we are well placed to tell him off. Such wild fantasy is neither sensible nor good. (D. A. Carson, *For the Love of God*, vol. 2, entry for March 12)

3.2. Praise God that he doesn't owe anything to anyone!