

The Book of Job

Lesson 15: God's Power Displayed in Behemoth and Leviathan -- Job 40:3-41:34

There comes a moment in every honest life when the words run out. You have argued your case, rehearsed your defense, lined up your grievances, and then God speaks, and suddenly your mouth feels too small for what you were about to say. That is exactly where we find Job at the opening of this lesson. After chapters of demanding an audience with the Almighty, Job finally gets one, and his first humbled response is not a speech but a surrender: 'I lay my hand on my mouth' (40:4). He has been talking the whole book. Now, for the first time, he goes quiet.

But God is not finished. The Lord does not pat Job on the head and send him home the moment Job stops complaining. Instead, He presses further, parading before Job two of the most formidable creatures in all creation: Behemoth, the great beast that drinks up a river without alarm, and Leviathan, the terror of the deep that no hook can land and no harpoon can hold. God spends nearly two full chapters on these creatures. Why linger so long on a hippopotamus-like brute and a sea monster? Because Job needs to feel something words alone cannot teach: how vast the gap is between the creature and the Creator.

We can get lost here if we are not careful. People spend whole evenings arguing whether Behemoth is an elephant, a hippo, or a dinosaur, whether Leviathan is a crocodile, a whale, or something mythic. That is not the point, and chasing it can make us miss the sermon God is preaching. The point is simpler and far more searching: if Job cannot so much as put a leash on these creatures, if he would not dare lay a hand on Leviathan and would never try it twice, then how on earth could he presume to instruct the One who made them and feeds them and holds them in His hand?

This is a weighty, climactic lesson, and it is meant to land on us as much as on Job. We live in an age that imagines it has tamed the world, and we carry that swagger right into our prayers, ready to coach God on how He ought to run things. But God's display of His might is not cruelty; it is mercy. He is leading Job, and leading us, down the only road that ends in peace: humble, worshipful, trusting surrender to a God whose power and wisdom are simply beyond our reach. Read these chapters slowly, and let the river-drinking beast and the fire-breathing serpent do to your pride what a hundred arguments could not.

Group Discussion: When have you, like Job, finally put your hand over your mouth before God after a season of arguing or demanding? What did God use to bring you to that quiet, and what changed in you once you stopped talking?

Personal Reflection: Where in your life right now are you still trying to instruct God instead of trust Him? Name the specific situation, and ask yourself honestly what it would look like to lay your hand on your mouth and rest in His wisdom this week.

Read Job 40:3–41:34

Study Questions

1. In Job 40:3–5, what does Job's response, 'I lay my hand on my mouth,' reveal about the proper posture of a creature before the Creator, and why is silence sometimes more reverent than speech?
2. When God exposes how little you actually control, do you respond with humility or with resentment? Describe a recent time your limits were laid bare and how you handled it.
3. In Job 40:6–14, God challenges Job to clothe himself with majesty and bring down the proud if he can. What is God teaching Job (and us) about who alone is fit to govern the moral order of the universe?
4. Are there places where you secretly believe you could run things more justly than God does? Where does that quiet arrogance show up in your attitudes or complaints?
5. In Job 40:15–24, God points Job to Behemoth, a creature of staggering strength that Job did not make and cannot master. How does pondering a creature you cannot tame reshape how you think about the God who made it 'as well as you' (40:15)?

6. What is one part of God's creation that has recently filled you with awe, and how did that wonder affect the way you prayed or worshiped?
7. In Job 41:1–11, God asks whether Job can draw out Leviathan with a hook or make a covenant with him. God then declares, 'Whatever is under the whole heaven is mine' (41:11). What does this claim teach about God's absolute ownership and Job's (and our) standing as debtors who can demand nothing?
8. When you cannot 'land' a problem in your life, something you cannot fix, force, or control, how do you tend to react, and what would trusting God's ownership look like there instead?
9. Taking Job 40:6–41:34 as a whole, especially the untamable Leviathan whom 'no one is so fierce that he dares to stir him up' (41:10), how does God's incomparable power over all creation summon us not merely to admit His strength but to humbly trust and surrender to Him, even when He has not explained our suffering?
10. Looking back across this whole passage, name one specific way the Lord Jesus is using God's overwhelming power and wisdom to form a deeper, quieter trust in you, the kind of trust that can say 'I lay my hand on my mouth' and mean it.

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: Psalm 104:24–30, God’s wisdom and power sustaining every creature, including Leviathan; Isaiah 40:12–26, the Creator measured against the nothingness of the nations; Romans 11:33–36, the unsearchable depth of God’s wisdom and the doxology of surrender; Matthew 8:23–27, even wind and sea obey the One greater than Leviathan; Proverbs 9:10, the fear of the LORD as the beginning of wisdom

More studies available on ChurchOfChristBibleStudies.com