

# God Speaks

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[ 0 : 00 ] Thank you so much, Thomas and Adi, and we do pray that God will add the blessing to his holy words. Folks, turn back with me to Job chapter 38. As you're turning there, let me tell you about my favorite TV blooper ever in the history of television.

Back in 2010, a guy called, or a man called, Guy Kumi appears on BBC News. Right, and he's there, he's being interviewed, asked to give his take on a recent court case that happened in the music industry, right, back in 2010.

I'm sure if you thought about it, you could understand some of the questions that were being asked back in 2010. So the news lady asks him, she says, Mr. Kumi, were you surprised by the outcome of the case?

And the guy's a rabbit caught in the headlights, and he's got absolutely nothing of worth to say. So she perseveres, she asks him again, she says, tell me, what was your take on the financial outcome of the case?

Again, the man stares blankly, he tries to waffle an answer, but he has absolutely nothing to say. So she tries one more time, and she says, tell me, Mr. Kumi, what do you think this means for the future of the music industry?

[ 1 : 12 ] And once again, he has absolutely nothing to say. And it goes down in the history of one of the worst TV interviews of all time. So you had this car crash moment of television where the nation watched this man publicly wilt in front of the cameras, in front of the heat of the questions that were coming at him.

And it suddenly dawned on everyone that they'd invited the wrong person. They'd invited the wrong man. So they put a man on the set, and they're grilling him with these questions, and they've got the wrong man.

Right? He's got no wisdom to offer, he's got no insights to give, and the man is just so clearly out of his depth. Now here's the thing. Here's my week. Spent the first half of the week having heard that story, having a right good laugh at Guy Kumi.

Right? It's a funny story, isn't it? Having a right good laugh at him. And then I spent the second half of this week, as I faced up to the awesomeness of the God who speaks in these chapters of Job, and thought about the questions which he asks him, realizing that I am Guy Kumi.

Here's what's going on as we get back into the letter, or sorry, the book of Job. Job is finally getting what he's wanted the whole time. What's he wanted the whole time? We've traveled with him through this book, haven't we?

[ 2 : 39 ] He's just wanted God to answer him. It's what he's wanted, right? You don't need to turn there, but chapter 23 at the beginning. Here's just a little snippet of what Job has wanted. Chapter 23.

Job says, If only I knew where to find him. If only I could go to his dwelling. I would state my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments. I would find out what he would answer me and consider what he would say to me.

Job has just wanted God to speak. What have you got to say, God? Why is this happening? Well, in these chapters, the rest of the book, Job gets his wish.

And it's as if, to tie in with the imagery, God invites Job into his studio and says, Take a seat. Right? And Job sits there with all kinds of accusations in his mind.

He's sitting there with all sorts of questions. And I think he's sitting there, I'd imagine, with all sorts of suggestions in his mind as to how God should govern the universe. Do you remember, this is, again, a song that's been in my head all week.

[ 3 : 41 ] Do you remember when we were little and there was that nursery song? Right? It went something like this. The runaway train came over the hill and she blew. Remember that song? The runaway train came over the hill and she blew.

And the whole thing was about this train that was just completely out of control. And I googled the lyrics this week, right? The engineer can't stop the train, nor the fireman can't stop the train, nor the conductor can't stop the train.

This thing is totally out of control. And we sing it to this kind of nice little nursery rhyme, don't we? But it's such a horrible song when you think about it. But that's what Job has concluded is true about God and his relationship to the world.

It's chaos. It's out of control. Who's in control of this thing? Who's sitting there conducting this thing? Maybe that's where you're at today. Right?

Is there a God who's in control of the world? Maybe in light of everything that's gone on in the world over the last couple of weeks and the heartbreaking pictures and videos that we've seen from different parts of our world.

[ 4 : 49 ] We were praying for Haiti, weren't we, just a few moments ago. Maybe that's the question that's front and center of your mind as you sit here today. And I take it that is a valid question and that is a good question that I'm sure every single one of us has thought about.

Is there a good God who's in control of this? We see God has patiently waited and he's listened to Job and his friends for 37 chapters.

Remember we said last week, it's a testimony, isn't it, to the character of God. He is patient. And God finally says, let me speak. And he says, verse 3 of chapter 38, and we'll tap into the text here. He says, I will question you. And everything that follows centers around the summary key question I think that God asks. And if you didn't feel like Gaikumi before, you will just now.

What does he say at verse 4? What's the question? Here's the opening gambit. Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Wow.

[ 5 : 55 ] Right? Most of us weren't even here for the beginning of our houses, let alone the creation of the world. God says, where were you? And what's God's point?

Surely it's to reaffirm to Job that he is the creator and Job is the creature. And as the creator, he is in control of his creation. In ways that are far above Job's capacity as a creature to fully understand. And so as we consider these questions, and there's a lot of them. I started counting them this week. And there was just too many for me to count. I take it two things are going to happen to us. Firstly, we will be shrunk down to size.

Okay? As we contemplate our smallness. And I take it that that is a really healthy thing for us to do. A good spoonful of humility is always a healthy thing. They will shrink us down.

And I hope and I pray that they will build us up as we consider God's goodness. Let me just try and point us in the right direction.

[ 6 : 59 ] I'm just going to pick out three quick things here. Just to, I think just to help us see the way in which God is approaching this conversation. Do you notice beginning of verse 38, who is it that's speaking?

It's not God. Well, it is God. But the term there is not God. It's the Lord, isn't it? It's the covenant name of God. It's the God who has committed himself to his people.

It is the God of steadfast love and faithfulness. And it's as almost as if the writer at this point is saying, remember who's speaking. This is the Lord. This is who he is. The Lord speaks.

But have you ever considered how wonderful a thing it is that the creator of the universe would speak? Have you ever thought about that? That he would speak face to face with Job? But he would speak to us.

Have you ever considered that the book you have in front of you is God's inspired word? It's his very word to us. Right? Written in a way that we can understand. He speaks in a way that we will comprehend who he is.

[ 8 : 01 ] And we can pick this up in our own language. And remember the people who made sacrifices down the generations that this would be a privilege for us. And read and understand and use to nick a line. The wisdom and reason that God has put in our minds.

And you see that in chapter 38 verse 36. Wisdom in our minds that we can pick up, read, think and respond to who he is. This is the Lord who speaks.

And lastly, notice how he speaks. Could have just made blanket statements, couldn't he? I made God, the Lord. I made the earth. I made the seas.

I hold the stars in place. I make the birds fly. I make the seas gush. But do you see how God does this? Rhetorical questions. Do you see?

What's the purpose of a rhetorical question? Are there to invite you to reflect on the question and to think about the logic of the answer? Isn't that just a wonderful bit of pastoral wisdom that God uses here?

[9:05] It's almost inviting Job in to see. See who I am. Right? God invites Job to look out and consider what the universe is telling him. What is it that Sherlock always says to Watson?

What do you deduce, Watson? Isn't it? What do you deduce, Watson? Well, that's, I think, is what God is doing here. God takes Job on a tour of the universe that he has made and controls and says, what do you deduce?

What does it tell you? And he takes him firstly to the highest and the widest of places. Chapter 38. Takes him to the earth.

Verse 4. Were you there in the beginning, Job? Right? Did you stretch out the earth's dimensions? Did you sink it down? Right? The imagery here.

We've got an architect here. You'll feel this imagery, right? That's what he's saying. God is the architect. He is the builder of the entire creation. That's the imagery here.

[10:04] Verse 8. What about the mighty seas, Job? What about the mighty seas? Did you cause them to gush forth? Did you determine their boundaries?

I love the language God is saying that the seas will only come so far. I've determined their places. What about the sun? Verse 12. The morning.

The sun that rises every day. The description here is almost like God whispers in the ear of the sun. And the sun gets up and does its thing. Right? Like a parent with their child. This is what God is doing.

Do you cause the rain to fall? Verse 25. Right? I knew I was middle-aged. I said to the girls yesterday. I was tipping it down. And I'm happy. Why am I happy? Because the plants will get a good water.

But it's true, isn't it? What he's saying. Do you cause the rain to fall? Verse 25. Water the earth. Do you cause the grass to grow? How about the stars? Verse 31.

[10:59] Love that description of God creating the world. Genesis 1 and Genesis 2. And he created the stars. It wasn't difficult for him. I think that's the point. He created the stars.

The Pleiades. I think that's how you say it. The Orion. Did you create them, Job? Did you make them do their thing? Remember, twinkle, twinkle, little star, how I wonder what you are.

What they are is testament to God's wisdom in creation. And on and on and on we could go here. God takes Job to the highest of places and says, what do you deduce?

And he takes them to the widest of places. And to the animals. Chapter 39. Job, do you know when the mountain goats give birth?

Follow with me. Verse 5. Who let the wild donkey go free? Verse 9. Will the wild ox consent to serve you? Verse 13. The wings of the ostrich flap joyfully, though they cannot compare.

[12:00] Verse 26. Does the hawk take flight by your wisdom? And spread its wings towards the thouse? Does the eagle do its thing on your command?

I think the point is that all of these animals, right, you wouldn't find any of them down at Pets at Home. Right? Think about who they are. No child is asking for a wild donkey for Christmas. Right? That was not coming to me in four months' time. These aren't domesticated. These aren't desirable animals. And remember back in chapter 1, the context of the book, Job is no stranger to animals. Right? Right back in chapter 1, we're introduced to him as a man who has an impressive number of animals that he owns. So he knows animals, but he doesn't know these ones. He's probably never seen them, let alone managed to control them.

Right? He doesn't know who these animals are. You know, it never ceases to amaze me. You know, we watch these nature programs on BBC, right? They're fantastic things. It never ceases to amaze me that as human beings we're still finding creatures.

[13:01] You know, I think that in the depths of the oceans and we're still finding things. We've been on this planet for how many numbers of years and we're still finding things. Is that not really cool?

But is it also not incredibly humbling that there's animals out there, there's creatures that we just don't know about? In the words of Pokemon, right? We ain't caught them all.

God is saying, Job, I've just got knowledge on a level of my creation that you just don't have. And yet, says God, even these wild animals that no one knows about, no one cares about, I made them. And I have complete knowledge of them. I love that image, isn't it, of the animals giving birth. Were you there? Do you know what I know? I know when they give birth. I know when they set out. I provide for them. This God of all power and yet this God of intimate knowledge. This is the kind of God that we're dealing here.

[14:00] He takes Job to the highest and the widest of places and says, Job, what do you deduce? And he also takes them to the deepest and the darkest of places.

Highest and widest, deepest and darkest. You know, there's that famous scene, isn't there, in the Lion King where Mephasis is speaking to Simba. And they're talking about where the reign of their kingdom goes to.

And Simba says, what about that shadowy place? What about that shadowy place? And Mephasis says, no. That's not our land. That's not our kingdom. You must never go there.

Not so with this God. Not so with this God. Everything is under his control. And while that is absolutely true, friends, we would do really well to grapple with, I've spent my whole week doing this, grapple with the exact language that's being used here.

Right? Let me just give you a couple of these. Again, just don't settle for a simplistic answer. You've got to think harder about what this is saying. If you've got chapter 38 there, verse 17.

[15:09] Where does God take Job? Have the gates of death been shown to you? Have you seen the gates of the deepest darkness? Right?

Verse 23. Do you see God mentions the battles and wars? Even the description of some of the animals, the lions hunting their prey. Verse 39.

I even noticed one in the reading there that hadn't seen the description of the hawk. 39, 40. It's young ones suck up the blood and where the slain are, there it is.

The ostrich, verse 16, dealing cruelly with her young. Think about what's being described here. You know, we love that Louis Armstrong song, don't we? What a wonderful world. And it absolutely is. The heavens declare the glory of God. And yet, is it not true that there's something of truth in what Gary Jewell sang? Mad world. Thinking about what goes on in our world.

[16:06] And we read this and we have to conclude, it's a beautiful world. But is it not a scary world as well? Is that not what's being described here? What is it C.S. Lewis said about the world?

It is a glorious ruin. And you have to say often, don't you? Often it doesn't feel like a world that is created and governed by a good God.

And see this mention of hail and thunder. It naturally raises questions about things like natural disasters, doesn't it? Imagine your brains went straight there when we read it.

Hugely relevant given the images we've seen from Haiti over the last few weeks. But I imagine even hearing on the news last night, stuff that might be coming up in central and northern America. Why do they happen?

What's going on here? And I take it the honest answer we have to give as human beings and the honest answer we have to give as followers of Jesus is that we just don't know.

[17:09] And I think any attempt on our behalf to pretend that we have got a full answer to that question is both untrue and unhelpful.

We just don't know. And so I've been thinking about all week. Why does God even include this? Why not just stop with the grand stuff?

The earth and the stars and the sun. We'd love that. We get that. Why take them here? I take it that there's great assurance here for Job. Not only by the fact that God is saying, I'm in sovereign control of all this.

But perhaps there's something more going on here. You know, apparently the scene, if you remember the David Attenborough documentary back in the day, Planet Earth.

Right. Did you know the most complained about scene in that whole thing was the scene where the lions took on the elephants? And I think they managed to take one down and the whole thing was about how they devoured it.

[18:14] People hated it. Don't watch it. It's turning over. But it's not interesting, friends. It's not quite revealing for us. It's not quite revealing for us. That when we see this kind of stuff happen in

the dark, we instinctively know that there's something not quite right about that.

And the Bible would say that that gut reaction, that there's something not quite right with this world, is absolutely true. This isn't the perfect world, is it, that we see described in Genesis 1 and Genesis 2.

Things here like death, darkness and evil, they were nowhere to be found in Genesis 1 and Genesis 2. This is the world ravaged by the effects of the fall post-Genesis 3.

And it's a world that Job is currently experiencing. And it's a world in desperate need of renewal.

And so as God asks Job to consider the darkness and the things that don't quite make sense, is he saying, Job, you can trust me that I will deal with it.

A world where the lion and the lamb live together. A world where death is swallowed up by life. A world where darkness is banished because the light has told it to go and the light reigns.

[ 19 : 45 ] Long for that kind of world. It's the one, isn't it, that the Bible describes. Jesus comes, Jesus judges, Jesus banishes all things.

All things that would stand against him, all sin as a distant memory. Pains, tears, gone, hurt, gone. As he brings in his perfect kingdom. Is there something as we read this? As our heart breaks for what's going on in the world.

How many times I've seen on my Twitter this week just that phrase, come Lord Jesus. So what do you deduce, Job? Where were you when I created the world?

Were you there? Were you there? Of course you weren't. And yet, friends, there was one man who once lived on earth who could honestly say that he was.

Love the opening verses of John's gospel. The man who spent the three intense years with Jesus Christ, seeing him up close and personal, understanding who he is, his teaching, his life, his miracles.

[ 20 : 57 ] Sees the crucifixion. Sees him rise. Sees him ascend. What did he write at the beginning of his gospel? In the beginning was the word. And the word was with God.

And the word was God. He was with God in the beginning. So John cannot get over Jesus Christ. You're not dealing with a simple thinker when you come into John's gospel. That's why every time you pick it up and read. It's just like I've never seen this before. What's going on? You discover new things. You know, I heard once recently of a woman in Iran who recently converted to Christianity and she referred to the God of the Bible as the like Jesus God.

Brilliant. If you're wondering what God is like, friends, judge him on Jesus. The one who came to reveal to us the Father, the one through whom all things were made, the one who is sustaining all things even as we speak.

Who is giving us life at this very moment and the one who is the very living word of God. You know, one of my favorite scenes in the gospels is for the one we just read earlier.

[ 22 : 09 ] It's where Jesus speaks to his disciples. Right? And I take it in that moment in Luke 12, if you get into the narrative, that there's a whole crowd of people listening on. And Jesus knows that their lives, just like ours, are marked by what?

Worry. Why? How do you find yourself here this morning worrying? What is worry at its core? If you boil it right down, is it not just, I know this in my own heart, to doubt that God is who he says he is.

And to doubt that God is in control. And to doubt that God knows what he's doing and that he loves me. Do you know, Jesus speaks to worried people. What does he tell them to do?

Try harder? No. Right? Go and do something else? No. What does he tell them to do? He tells them to look where? Up. Right? Consider the ravens.

God's just told Job to consider the ravens, hasn't he? Jesus said, consider the ravens. Right? You can imagine the crowd just looking up and thinking, what? What's going on? Right? You can't even reach them, let alone understand them, is saying Jesus.

[ 23 : 16 ] Right? They do not sow or reap. They have no storeroom or barn, yet God feeds them. Again, looking up, what do you deduce? He goes on, consider how the wild flowers grow.

Right? You thought about that? You ever looked at a flower and thought, do you know, it wasn't me that came up with the photosynthesis process. Right? It wasn't me that kind of came up with the thing, the cross pollination and how all that works.

It wasn't me when I go to the botanics. Right? It wasn't me that came up with all those wonderful and beautiful species of flowers and everything else that you see down there. And Jesus says, they do not labor or spin, yet I tell you not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of

these.

What is Jesus' point? It's how much more can you trust your heavenly father? If he's going to provide for them, how much more can you trust him to lovingly provide for your needs?

As I take it, there are tons of reasons why we might be sitting here this morning worrying. Right? Job insecurity, the future of the planet, relational tensions, bills to pay.

[ 24 : 27 ] Mouths to feed, schools to pick up from, universities to go to, jobs to find, accommodation to meet, deadlines to meet. Isn't it true that we are the most connected and probably technologically advanced age that there has ever been?

And yet is it not true that we are probably the generation who has worried the most and has most reasons to worry? It's why the late John Stott always used to say that it was for theological reasons that he took up bird watching.

Look at him. What is creation telling us? Jesus says, consider. And I love how Jesus doesn't sit down and answer every single person there. Their questions about what is going on in the world. He doesn't answer their worries. Yet what does he say? He says one thing. He says, what do you need to do? Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all else will be added to you. Come to me with your worries. Come to me with your burdens and trust that I am big enough to handle them. And how about you just go for a walk?

[ 25 : 37 ] I've done that. I find walks so helpful just to consider who God is. Go for a walk. What do you deduce? See who your heavenly father is.

The one who controls all things. The one who loves you and come to me and trust me and follow me. Says Jesus. And who is Jesus, friends, other than the very one who would experience the depths of death and darkness on the cross.

That's why the gospel writers make such a thing about darkness falling on Jesus. He experiences utter darkness. Our sin on him. He takes our place.

He knows what it is to be in this world. Jesus, who would rise and who would say in the same chapter in Luke chapter 12, in the same passage, do not be afraid, little flock.

Love that Jesus calls his little sheep. Isn't that incredible? You'll feel like that in your life. Little sheep. You can't fathom this. You do not understand. But you know what? It is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

[ 26 : 49 ] This is who Jesus Christ is. You know, just as we close, we've had American presidents in the news all week, right? I've had the words of Barack Obama in my head all week.

Remember his famous tagline, his famous phrase from his acceptance speech when he became president in 2008? Remember that line? The fact that we remember it even today shows how powerful it was.

Yes, we can. Remember that? Yes, we can. So he said to a nation, yes, we can. Notwithstanding the merits of everything that he was talking about and all of that, here's what I want to suggest. That we cannot leave these chapters of Scripture and conclude, yes, we can. The mantra here surely has to be, no, we can't.

No, we can't. And some of us will have lived that this week. You know, my week, honestly, I have first week back from holiday, all sorts of worries in my mind, right?

[ 27 : 51 ] Emails to answer, sermon to write, services to plan. Kids starting school this week, they're in different places, going to pick them up. How am I going to pick them up in different places? What food are we going to eat?

We've got no food in the cupboards. What's going on? All these different things coming at you in life. Think to myself, I do not have the mental capacity to do all of this. Came to Wednesday night, I'm sleeping at half past nine.

Never happened before. No, we can't. I can't. I can't do it. Friends, I take it there is great freedom in embracing the fact that we are gaikumi.

We are the guy at the start who doesn't have the answers. Where were you when the world was created? You're asking the wrong guy, right? I am the creature, not the creator.

But you know what? This God, this good, no, I can't. And I think that's what qualifies people, as it were, to come to Jesus.

[ 28 : 46 ] When you read the Gospels, he's never turning away the people who fall at him and say, I haven't got this sorted. Don't know what I'm doing. I'm sinful. Would you help me? It's never those people he's turning away.

Friends, I find myself there all the time, looking to Jesus and concluding, no, I can't. But yes, he can. My savior, my redeemer, my king, my lord, this is who he is.

Taking in who he is, coming to him. Yes, you can. And more than that, yes, you will. Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus, just to take him at his word, just to rest upon his promise, just to know, thus say the Lord.

Jesus, Jesus, how I trust him, how I've proved him over and over. Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus, offer grace to trust him more.

Let's pray. Friends, maybe in the quiet of your own heart, why not just use this few moments, just to come before this heavenly father who knows you and who loves you.

[ 30 : 04 ] I want to come before him in prayer in a silence now. Do not be afraid, little flock. For your father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.

Father, we come here this morning with all sorts of questions and worries and burdens and doubts and people on our minds.

Father, we realize our capacity, Lord, is so limited. Father, I pray that you would help us to understand that we are the creature and you are the creator.

But to understand that through Jesus in him, that you are our good heavenly father who knows us, who loves us and he will provide for all of our needs.

So, Father, we thank you for this time together this morning, just spending listening to your voice as we turn to the Bible. So, we pray you'll be with us now as we continue on. In Jesus' name we pray.

[ 31 : 11 ] Amen.