

## **Job 38:1-11<sup>v</sup>**

Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind: "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up your loins like a man, I will question you, and you shall declare to me. Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone when the morning stars sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy? Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb?— when I made the clouds its garment, and thick darkness its swaddling band, and prescribed bounds for it, and set bars and doors, and said, 'Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stopped?'"

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### **<sup>v</sup> About Job 38:1-11**

The book of Job struggles with the mystery of why good people suffer when they ought to be rewarded for their good. The book was composed by adding poetic dialogue to a familiar folk legend.

The basic story found in the prose sections that begin and end the book (1:1-2:13, 42:7-17) tells of the righteous sufferer, the proverbial 'patient Job' (Ezekiel 14:14, 20; James 5:11). This story may have been set down in writing as early as the time of David and Solomon (1000-800 BCE). The poetic sections that have been inserted into the prose story—the dialogues of Job and his three comforters about God's ways of justice and the final response of the Lord to Job—are post-exilic and date from between 600-300 BCE.

Speaking out of profound faith, Job has asserted his innocence and challenged God to answer him (31:35-40) and account for his suffering. In today's reading, the Lord speaks from the whirlwind in fulfillment of Job's longing (13:22, 23:5, 30:20). Although God vindicates Job's innocence and denounces the dogmatism of his friends (42:7-17), God's ways are not to be comprehended. The result is a kind of stand off. God does not give Job the explanation he wants, and Job does not surrender his own integrity. Rather, Job yields to the Lord and is

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transformed by his experience of confrontation (42:5).

The resolution of the problem of the just person who suffers is hidden in the mystery of the person of God. God is truly free of all human restraints, even beyond the highest human standards of justice and mercy (Exodus 33:19; Romans 9:15). At the furthest extreme, God remains a “hidden God” (Isaiah 45:15) shrouded in unfathomable mystery.