

“The Cosmic Soul: Mystery”  
Job 38:1-11

Greenland has been in the news recently. One article that caught my eye was from NPR regarding the actual size of Greenland on a map. It turns out that not all maps are created equal.



If you look at a standard Mercator projection—the one most of us grew up with in classrooms—Greenland appears roughly the same size as the continent of Africa. In reality, Africa is **14 times larger** than Greenland. The map is a distortion. Because it tries to flatten a sphere onto a two-dimensional surface, the landmasses closest to the poles get "stretched" out of proportion.

The Mercator map was designed for sailors to plot straight lines; it was a map for **utility and control**. But it sacrificed the truth of the "sphere" for the convenience of the "line."

### The Maps of the Ego

As children, we were told these maps were facts. As adults, we often do the same thing with our lives. We create "maps" of how life *should* work: *If I am good, I will be happy. If I work hard, I will succeed. If I follow the rules, I will be safe.* These are 2D maps. They are helpful for navigating daily tasks, but they cannot capture the "sphere" of a human life. Complexity and mystery are uncomfortable for us. We prefer things we can manage and control. But as

James Conlon suggests, the gift of our souls is our deep connection to the cosmos—a reality that is simply too large to fit on a flat map.

### **Job: When the Map Tears**

One biblical character who learned this the hard way was **Job**. His story begins like a fairy tale: *"Once upon a time, in the land of Uz..."* Uz means "fertile." Job had the perfect map. He was righteous, wealthy, and blessed. But then, the map tore. He lost his children, his wealth, and his health.

Job's friends spent 35 chapters trying to "fix" his map. They used the old logic: *"You must have sinned, Job. There must be a reason."* They wanted a map where everything made sense. But Job refused to settle for a lie. He sat in the ash heap and demanded an audience with the Creator.

### [Bible Project Summary of Job](#)

The Book of Job doesn't give a "reason" for suffering. Instead, it does something far more radical: **It expands the map.**

### **The Whirlwind's Answer**

When God finally speaks in Chapter 38, it isn't a lecture on morality. It is a tour of the cosmos. Let's listen to Job 38:1-11

Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind:

<sup>2</sup> "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?"

<sup>3</sup> Gird up your loins like a man;  
I will question you, and you shall declare to me.

<sup>4</sup> "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?  
Tell me, if you have understanding.

<sup>5</sup> Who determined its measurements—surely you know!  
Or who stretched the line upon it?

<sup>6</sup> On what were its bases sunk,  
or who laid its cornerstone

<sup>7</sup> when the morning stars sang together  
and all the heavenly beings<sup>[a]</sup> shouted for joy?

<sup>8</sup> "Or who shut in the sea with doors  
when it burst out from the womb,

<sup>9</sup> when I made the clouds its garment  
and thick darkness its swaddling band,

<sup>10</sup> and prescribed bounds for it,  
 and set bars and doors,  
<sup>11</sup> and said, 'Thus far shall you come and no farther,  
 and here shall your proud waves be stopped'?

*"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? ... Who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb?"*

God reminds Job that he is a finite being living in an infinite reality. God is essentially saying, *"Job, your map is too small. You are looking at Greenland and thinking it's the whole world. Come and see the Morning Stars singing together."*

The answer to Job's suffering wasn't an explanation; it was an **encounter with Mystery**. In learning to trust the mystery, Job discovered a different kind of map—not one that foresees every turn, but one that helps us trust the One who makes the way.

### **Softening the Fist**

Journalist Krista Tippett once shared a story from a retreat. A monk asked the participants to clench one hand into a tight fist. He told them to try to force that fist open with their other hand. What happened? The fist only clenched tighter. It's a natural reaction to force.

Then he said: "**Now, take your other hand and simply cradle the fist.**" When the fist was cradled—when it was held with warmth and presence—it naturally softened and released.

Our minds are often like that fist. We clench around our "maps," our "whys," and our "certainties." But the soul doesn't use force. The soul **cradles**. To finish our service today, I invite you into a meditation in the style of Meggan Watterson—a way to hear the "Voice of the Soul" that lives within the mystery.

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### **The Voice of the Soul: A Meditation**

*(Adapted from the work of Meggan Watterson)*

*Close your eyes. Place one hand on your heart and the other on your belly. Feel the rise and fall of your breath—the same breath that moved over the deep in Genesis 1.*

**The Descent:** Imagine you are leaving the "Map Room" of your mind. Leave behind the labels, the "shoulds," and the constant need to explain your life. Visualize a spiral staircase in the center of your chest. With every breath, you are walking down, moving deeper into the "fertile land" of your own interior.

**The Sanctuary of Mystery:** At the bottom of the stairs is a cathedral made of stardust. It is dark, but not a frightening dark. It is the "swaddling band" darkness God described to Job—the darkness of a womb where new things are being born.

In this space, you don't need to be right. You don't need to be healed yet. You don't need to have a plan. You only need to **be**.

**Hearing the Voice:** Listen for the "Voice of the Soul." It doesn't sound like your thinking mind. It doesn't argue. It sounds like a deep, ancient "Yes."

Imagine your Soul cradling your clenched heart. Hear it whisper: *"I am here. I have been here since the morning stars sang for joy. You are larger than your suffering. You are wider than your fear. You belong to the Mystery, and the Mystery is Love."*

**The Release:** Feel the fist of your ego soften. Let the distortion of your "small maps" fall away. You are a child of the universe. You are a "Cosmic Soul." And in this vast, shimmering Mystery... **All shall be well.**

*Take one more deep breath. When you are ready, carry this "Unmapped Peace" back into the world. Amen.*