

INTRODUCTION

In the previous message we examined a selection of the questions God asked Job. Job didn't have any answers. When you think about it, life is filled with unanswerable questions. In fact, I've been trying to find the answers to some very deep questions. For instance:

1. When cheese gets its picture taken, what does it say?
2. How can you tell when sour cream goes bad?
3. What hair color do they put on the driver's licenses of bald men?
4. Why is the man who invests all your money called a broker?
5. If buttered bread always lands on the butter-side down and a cat always lands on its feet, what happens if you strap buttered bread to a cat's back?
6. If a man is standing in the middle of the forest speaking and there is no woman around to hear him, is he still wrong?

Obviously, those questions aren't even *worth* answering! But there are some sincere questions people ask God. For instance, our focal character, Job, kept asking God, “Lord, why am I suffering?” For most of the book, God was silent, and then in Chapter 38, He broke into the story and spoke to Job out of a storm. But He didn't give Job the answers he was seeking. Instead, God started asking Job questions—and Job discovered he didn't have any answers.

As we pick up the story in Job 40, God began round two of questions. If Job had been a contestant on the television game show, this would have been the Double Jeopardy round. I can almost hear God saying, “And now let's play Double Jeopardy. Our categories are: Earth, Stars, Light; and two new categories: Behemoth and Leviathan. Now let's meet our contestant Job. Job didn't do very well in round one, in fact, his score is zero. So, now let's begin round two.

Job 40:6-9. “Then the Lord spoke to Job out of the storm: ‘Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. Would you discredit my justice? Would you condemn me to justify yourself? Do you have an arm like God's, and can your voice thunder like his?’”

At this point, God described two monstrous animals, one was called Behemoth and the other was called Leviathan. God's description of these two creatures is both fascinating and mysterious. William Blake portrayed them as looking like a type of hippopotamus and a dragon. We'll talk more about these two creatures in a moment.

Now skip ahead to Job 42. God has finished speaking to Job. I want you to see how Job responded to God's questioning.

Job 42:1-6: “Then Job replied to the Lord: ‘I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted. You asked, ‘Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?’ Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. You said, ‘Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me.’ My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.’”

We have now reached the climax of the book of Job. God finished questioning Job, and was waiting for Job’s reply. If Job had argued with God and said something like, “Yeah, I heard all of what you said, but, Lord, it’s just not fair that I’m suffering! What are you going to do about it, God?” If that had been his response that would have been the end of the story, and we probably wouldn’t even be reading the book of Job! Instead, Job finally gets it and responds to God in the proper way. If you are suffering and hurting, this is way you need to react as well. Notice four things Job said and did when he ran out of answers.

(1) ACKNOWLEDGE GOD’S UNLIMITED POWER

Job said “I know you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted.” (Job 42:2)

God had convinced Job that His power was unlimited. God’s point was driven home by His description of the two monstrous animals, behemoth and leviathan. The footnotes of the NIV translation say behemoth is a hippopotamus and leviathan is a crocodile. Those are just guesses—and I think they are poor guesses.

What was behemoth? I agree with the Bible scholars who suggest behemoth was actually a dinosaur that we’ve named brachiosaurus. The Hebrew word *behemoth* simply means “enormous creature.”

Notice the way God described behemoth in Job 40:15-19. “Look at the behemoth, which that I made along with you and which feeds on grass like an ox. What strength he has in his loins, what power in the muscles of his belly! His tail sways like a cedar; [that rules out a hippo or an elephant!] the sinews of his thighs are close-knit. His bones are tubes of bronze, his limbs like rods of iron. He ranks first among the works of God, [that could mean it was the largest land animal ever created] yet his Maker can approach him with his sword.” [That may be a reference to the fact that brachiosaurus is now extinct.]

A brachiosaurus was one of the largest land animals to ever walk on earth. Three times as tall as a giraffe, he was almost 80 feet long and weighed up to 88 tons; compare that to the largest African elephant on record—10 tons.

What was leviathan? Again, I agree with those who suggest this is a description of a prehistoric sea creature called Kronosaurus.

Here’s God’s description of leviathan in Job 41:1ff: “Can you pull in the Leviathan with a fishhook or tie down his tongue with a rope?”

Then look down in Job 41:7. “Can you fill his hide with harpoons or his head with fishing spears? If you lay a hand on him, you will remember the struggle and never do it again! Any hope of subduing him is false; the mere sight of him is overpowering. No one is fierce enough to rouse him. Who then is able to stand against me? Who has a claim against me that I must pay? Everything under heaven belongs to me. I will not fail to speak of his limbs, his strength and his graceful form. Who can strip off his outer coat?

Who would approach him with a bridle? Who dares open the doors of his mouth, ringed about with his fearsome teeth? His back has rows of shields tightly sealed together; each is so close to the next that no air can pass between.”

Then skip down to verses 31-33 to read God’s concluding description of Leviathan, “He makes the depths churn like a boiling caldron and stirs up the sea like a pot of ointment. Behind him he leaves a glistening wake; one would think the deep had white hair. Nothing on earth is his equal—a creature without fear.” [Leviathan is mentioned in Isaiah 27:1 and Psalm 104 as being a mighty sea creature]

Kronosaurus was a sea creature whose head was head nine feet long filled with razor-sharp teeth that were ten inches long. Crocodiles are scary, but they can be captured—just ask the Crocodile Hunter, Steve Irvin! But if he saw a leviathan he’d say something like, “Crickey, look at the size of that! I’m not going to touch ‘im!”

Sometimes Bible-believing Christians are ridiculed by non-believers by asking, “What about the dinosaurs?” They pose that question as if the presence of dinosaurs somehow invalidates the Bible. The word “dinosaur” wasn’t coined until 1841. It was first used by Dr. Richard Owens when archeologists began to uncover evidence for these large prehistoric creatures. They thought they were finding something new, when the Bible had already recorded these two majestic creatures 4,000 years earlier!

But don’t miss the point—it’s not about Jurassic Park—it’s about Jehovah’s power. The only reason God brought up Behemoth and Leviathan was as evidence of His unlimited power. If He created such mysterious, powerful animals, He can do *anything*! He made His point in Job 41:11-10 when He said, “Who then is able to stand against me? Everything under heaven belongs to me.”

Job got the point because he said, “I know you can do ALL THINGS.” Have you come to that point in your life? Do you believe God has unlimited power in your situation? You may think your situation is impossible, but God specializes in the impossible. When Gabriel told young Mary she would give birth to the Messiah, she questioned him by saying, “How can this be, since I have never been with a man?” I love Gabriel’s reply. He said, “NOTHING is impossible with God.” (Luke 1:37) In the midst of your impossible circumstances, hang onto these five powerful words: NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE WITH GOD!

(2) ADMIT YOUR INABILITY TO UNDERSTAND GOD

As Job reviewed all the words he uttered, he confessed in Job 42:3: “I spoke things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know.”

Sometimes we want people to think we’ve got it all together, but it’s okay to admit there are things beyond our understanding. I recall one Peanuts comic strip in which Lucy was dispensing psychiatric advice to Charlie Brown. She said, “Life is like a deck chair on a ship. Some place their chair so they can see where they’ve been, and others place it so they can see where they’re going.” To which Charlie Brown muttered, “And I can’t even get mine unfolded!”

Job was finally admitting to God that he didn't have everything figured out. Job had made the critical error of presuming to understand what God was doing. He admitted he was dead wrong. I sometimes laugh at some of the TV evangelists who are preaching that if you are right with God you will always enjoy health, wealth and prosperity. Their message is, "God loves you and has a wonderful Porsche for your life." Their theology doesn't allow any room for righteous suffering.

Those who have walked with God for the longest times and in the deepest fellowship recognize that there is a mystery about suffering we will never understand. A few days after the Islamic warriors attacked our nation on 9/11, there was a worship service held at the National Cathedral. Billy Graham was one of the speakers. On Sept. 14, 2001 he said: "I have been asked hundreds of times in my life why God allows tragedy and suffering. I have to confess that I really do not know the answer totally, even to my own satisfaction. I have to accept, by faith, that God is sovereign, and He's a God of love and mercy and compassion in the midst of suffering."

(3) SEEK GOD'S FACE INSTEAD OF HIS ANSWERS

Job had run out of answers, but he discovered something better than answers—he found God. In Job 42:5 he said, "My ears had heard of you, but now my eyes have seen you."

The advertising slogan for Radio Shack is "You've got questions, we've got answers." Job's position was just the opposite. He said, "God, you've got questions, but I don't have any answers." People are still seeking to find answers to the tough questions of life. But Job discovered it is better to seek God's face than to find answers.

Years ago there was a television series called "All in the Family." Archie Bunker was the stereotypical bigoted male chauvinist. His wife, Edith, was portrayed as a overly submissive wife who didn't have much intelligence. However, there was a verbal exchange in one episode where Edith said something profound. Archie's son-in-law, Michael, asked, "Tell me, Archie, if there is a God, why is this world messed up?" Archie said, "Why do I always have to give the answers? Edith, tell this dumb Polack why, if God created the world, it's in such a mess?" Edith replied, "Well, I suppose it's to make us appreciate heaven better when we get there." That's a pretty good answer, Edith!

Life is full of pain and sorrow. That's why we are going to enjoy heaven so much! Are you still seeking answers, or are you seeking God's face?

At the beginning of Job's story we learn Job was already a very religious man. Job 1:5 says Job made burnt offerings to God on behalf of his children. How did he know to offer sacrifices to God? Apparently, he had *heard* from some source that this was the way to relate to God. In other words, Job had heard about God, but it was not until he endured painful trials that he actually came face to face with God.

Before, he had what you might call an "empty religion," and when he encountered God, he gained an "eternal relationship" with God. Which do you have? Have you just heard things about God from your parents, or your pastor, or from someone else? That's why I've said many times

that I don't like religion. Religion is man's attempt to try to appease God. Christianity is God reaching out to man to initiate a person relationship with us.

There's an eternity of difference between religion (hearing about God) and a relationship (encountering God.). Empty religion is like reading about a foreign country in a travel guide; an eternal relationship is like visiting that country and experiencing it firsthand. Empty religion is like reading a recipe for delicious food; an eternal relationship is like sitting down to actually eat the food. Empty religion is like reading a newspaper ad for a convertible sports car; an eternal relationship is like driving it with the wind blowing in your hair. An empty religion would be like watching the Masters Golf Tournament on television; an eternal relationship is like actually playing a round of golf at Augusta with Tiger Woods!

Which do you have, an empty religion or an exciting, eternal relationship with God? Here's the fourth thing Job shows us to do when we run out of answers.

(4) HUMBLE YOURSELF AND REPENT

In Job 42:6 Job says, "I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."

Before you can seek God's face, you must be willing to humble yourself and repent. In II Chronicles 7:14 God said, "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I heard from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

Job wasn't degrading himself when he said, "I despise myself." He was simply stating his condition as he stood before a perfect, holy God. His humble attitude reflected what Jesus said in Matthew 5:3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Job admitted he was spiritually bankrupt before God. Humility is not thinking lowly of yourself; it is not thinking of yourself at all. When you see God in all of His brilliant holiness, you will also see yourself in all of your sinful depravity. When Isaiah saw God high and lifted up, his response was, "Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips." (Isaiah 6:5)

When Job saw God, he fell to his face to repent of his sins. You may wonder what sin he had committed. Job's sin was a brazen sin of the flesh: It was the subtle sins of disposition he had to turn from. Job did not do as Satan predicted. He never cursed God to his face. But Job had been guilty of trying to justify himself, and he was guilty of bitterness toward God.

You may be surprised, but do you know what the best thing is to do when you're going through a trial? Repent. You may argue, "Well I don't know anything that I've done that I need to repent." Just get on your knees before God and ask Him to reveal any hidden, secret sins and see what happens.

The question about why good people suffer has been with us throughout all generations. The attitudes of Job's friends that bad things happen to bad people is still with us today. Even in the time of Jesus people interpreted personal tragedy as God's punishment.

Suppose they had cable news networks during Jesus’ time. Two events would have been the lead stories.

“Good evening I’m Josephus Jeremias and this is the Lox News Network. We have some breaking news. Governor Pontius Pilate ordered a detachment of Roman soldiers into the Temple today to break up the protests of the Galilean rebels. The rebels refused to leave so swords were drawn, and we have reports that several of the rebels were killed by the sword. Not only were they killed, but their blood was splattered near the altar of sacrifice. More details at eleven. In another unrelated story, eighteen Jewish construction workers were killed when the stone tower they were building at Siloam collapsed. The names of the deceased are being withheld pending notification of family members.”

And now to comment on these two breaking stories is Rabbi Harel Ben Ezra. Rabbi, what’s your take on these two tragedies? One a man-made tragedy, and the other an unfortunate accident?” “Shalom Josephus. These were not accidents. The truth is simple: The Galilean rebels got what was coming to them. They were sinners and God was punishing them. The same can be said for the construction workers at the tower. Obviously, they were rotten sinners, too. That’s why God caused the tower to fall and kill them.”

And now to be fair and balanced, we have a remote hookup with the roving Galilean teacher, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus, are you there? Josephus Jeremias here with Lox News, what do you have to say about these two terrible tragedies? (Luke 13:1-5) Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. Jesus answered, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they SUFFERED this way? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.”

Jesus stressed that it is futile to try to figure out WHY bad things happen to people. He moved the issue beyond why and focused on WHAT every one of us must do: Repent! The word “repent” means “a change of mind that leads to a change of behavior.” In order to become a Christian you must repent of your sins; instead of thinking your sins are just minor flaws that everybody does, you must change your mind about them. You must repent and realize every sin is like spitting in the face of God; every sin is like pounding the nails into the flesh of Jesus. That’s what it means to repent—change your mind, then change your conduct.

But even after you become a Christian, you must keep on repenting. Whenever you find your thinking and God’s thinking don’t match, it’s time to change your mind again.

What did Job repent of? He repented of the way he had been thinking about God. He had made the mistake of thinking God was mean, vicious, and cruel. He wanted to argue his case before God. But once Job heard God’s voice, and saw His face, Job realized his thinking was all wrong. He changed his mind about himself and about God.

So if you are suffering and struggling, do what Job did. Humble yourself and repent—even if you don't think at this point there is anything in your life that needs repenting.

CONCLUSION

Job didn't get the answers he was looking for—he got something much more valuable. He came to know God on a personal level. Let his lesson serve you when you are passing through painful Job-like experiences. What do you do when you run out of answers? You admit there are questions in this life that will never be answered—but you can discover something much better than answers—you can find Jesus to be **THE ANSWER**.

A few years ago Scott Wesley Brown performed a song entitled "When Answers Aren't Enough." The words say: You have faced mountains of desperation. You have climbed, you have fought, you have won. But this valley that lies coldly before you, Casts a shadow you cannot overcome. Just when you thought you had it all together. You knew every verse to get you through. But this time all the sorrow broke more than just your heart. And reciting all those verses just won't do. When answers aren't enough, there is Jesus. He is more than just an answer to your prayer. And your heart will find a safe and peaceful refuge. When answers aren't enough, He is there.

OUTLINE

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes