

God Questions the Man Named Job

‘An astronomer was lecturing a group in France, and declared, “I have swept the universe with my telescope[s], and I find no God”. A musician appropriately rebuked the astronomer: “Your statement, sir, is as unreasonable as it is for me to say that I have taken my violin apart, have carefully examined each part with a microscope, and have found no music”.’

Interesting analogy. It reveals the very root of the problem, basically all the problems of the human race from time immemorial: pride. It’s probably *because* God gave us power and authority over His creation that we’ve become corrupted. As the old saying goes, “Power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely”. For it began when the serpent devil lied to Eve, asserting in Genesis 3:4-5, ““You won’t die! ... God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil”.’ A veneer of truth covering a gargantuan lie. Would that we knew not evil, but only good! What a wondrous world we’d live in. Actually, it’d be Heaven on earth. And, so it will be after our Lord Jesus returns to the earth. The devil’s big lie? “You won’t die!” At first Adam and Eve’s physical bodies never grew old, destined to live forever, as God their Father had created them to be. Now they began to age, and would eventual-

ly physically die of old age. But spiritually, they died right then and there. Eve and Adam, having both disobeyed God by eating the forbidden fruit, no longer could see, discern, or feel in themselves that they'd spiritually died. Their spiritual eyes were at that moment blinded. Oh sure, they could now mentally see and notice things physically they hadn't before, but this was more a change of attitude than a change in their bodies. For now they were seeing from the devil's viewpoint, himself a fallen creature, who'd preceded them in rebellion against God. They saw the world as he did. No longer from God's viewpoint. And what an incalculable loss that was!

Because the entirety of creation proclaims God's glory. Psalm 19:1 announces: "The heavens proclaim the glory of God. The skies display His craftsmanship". Truly, the very ordering, structure, and complicated microscopic moving parts of the universe, shout and scream that God both created and maintains everything that exists. No thing is left to chance. For even all the death and destruction that God allows satan to bring upon earth, God turns and uses to fulfill His marvelous purposes. From our limited perspective, it can seem that God is picking up the pieces left over from an assault of the devil on a community from a disastrous flood, or devastating tornado, but since God is God, He knew long beforehand, before all time even began, exactly what would happen and how He would make it just one more step in advancing His plan for all the ages of bringing humanity, His most

prized and beloved creatures, into full fellowship with Him forever.

Consider the Book of Job which brings all of this into clear relief. It deals head on with the alleged problem of suffering. Because from our, necessarily-worldly-because-of-our-sin, perspective, most times, suffering makes no sense whatsoever. We end up with interminable, philosophical discussions and debates over why bad things happen to good people, why people suffer pain, illness and prolonged suffering. Such as we see in Job. Indeed, no fewer than 33 chapters of this apparently oldest book of the Bible are devoted to just such discussion and debate. And let me tell you, most all of it from the perspective of mankind. A worldly, human, earthly perspective. For if nothing else, the Book of Job teaches us in spades what God later spoke through the prophet in Isaiah 55:9: “For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so My ways are higher than your ways and My thoughts higher than your thoughts”. In short, we don’t know everything! And frankly, we never will!! Because we are not God.

Now, this debate about the whys of suffering could go on ad infinitum, and indeed, it has, via human debaters for all human history, with no resolution in sight. For, without the acknowledgement that we don’t know everything and that God does, it can never be resolved. The book goes on for 33 chapters trying to find a reasonable answer to this problem in particular in the case regarding Job. Here was one of the wealthiest men of his time, comparable to a billionaire in our day, who in a literal matter

of hours, lost not only all his wealth, but all his children. Only his wife and his own house remained. This is a tragedy that many people in our day would commit suicide over. Indeed many have over far less. But Job still had his health. And though difficult to start over from scratch, that he could still do. Despite his heart-breaking loss of his dearly-loved children, for whom he had made sacrifices to the Lord every day, he did not sin against God nor blame Him for the harm that had come.

What a blessing it is to have one's health! So, according to Jewish rabbinical interpretation, ten days later, on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, satan again came before God in the Council of Heaven, representing himself and all fallen angels. The Lord again mentioned Job, singling him out as the most righteous of God's servants on earth. The devil then claimed it was because Job still had good health, asserting that if he were to physically suffer, he would then not only stop being God's servant, but would turn on God; instead of blessing God he would then curse God. So God, in His providence, allowed satan to strike Job's body with "terrible boils from head to foot" (Job 2:7). These were most painful, which left Job sitting in ashes, so great was his understandable grief and pain, while he scraped his oozing sores with broken pieces of pottery. Can you imagine the misery? Not only extreme pain, but the absolutely gross mess that the continual discharge from his sores created as they dribbled down his skin and clothing. It's no wonder that his wife, so repulsive and sick-

ening was his appearance, that she flat out told him, “Curse God and die”. Presumably, if he did that, then she could, more or less, get on with her life, which was now completely on hold because of her husband’s pitiable condition. She probably later came to regret her words, but here when she spoke them, her husband Job reprimanded her, as recorded in Job 2:10: ““You talk like a foolish woman. Should we accept only good things from the hand of God and never anything bad?” So in all this, Job said nothing wrong’. Indeed, Job’s wife had spoken quite foolishly, and sinfully.

Word had quickly spread that the famous Job was now but a shell of what he’d been. His three closest friends flew from their far off domains to be with him. As they arrived, they couldn’t even recognize him, so disfigured was he from suffering and skin disease. There were good friends at first. But then they began to talk. The longer they talked, the worse friends they became. Their conversation devolved into philosophical debate, discussing why Job suffered. And it went on 33 chapters long, delving ever more into God’s purposes. Which they had all wrong. For like all humans, even the supposedly most enlightened, educated and elite of today’s self-appointed “leaders”, these friends, the elite of their day, saw themselves as the important leaders who were wiser than the common folk. And therein was revealed their pride. Presuming to speak for God and His will and purposes, they ended up totally misrepresenting God. And if there is anything God hates, it’s lies being told about His character. It’s most upsetting,

even if it's lies told about yourself or myself. It's enough to raise anyone's ire in the extreme. Which is why we have libel laws.

So after 33 chapters of this seemingly interminable verbiage from the three friends, joined at the end by another man who spoke more correctly, God's finally heard enough, and had enough. He decides to set the record straight, not just for Job, but also for the three friends who were digging themselves deeper with every additional word they uttered! So God personally comes down and speaks. As is God's "habit", He came down in a thunderous, roaring wind, described here as a whirlwind that didn't actually blow anything around destructively, as would a normal cyclone or tornado. Addressing Job directly, in the hearing of all, God demands, "Who is this that questions My wisdom with such ignorant words? Brace yourself like a man, because I have some questions for you, and you must answer them". God asks Job in four succinct verses: "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell me, if you know so much. Who determined its dimensions and stretched out the surveying line? What supports its foundations, and who laid its cornerstone as the morning stars sang together and all the angels[a] shouted for joy?" Obviously no one, let alone Job, could answer any of these questions. Which already has left them all speechless at God's awesome majesty and mind-blowing magnificence. For God is far greater than your highest imaginations. We'll continue with God's monologue next week.

