

Who Are You?

Job 38:4–18



⁴“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. ⁵Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? ⁶On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, ⁷when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy? ⁸“Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb, ⁹when I made clouds its garment and thick darkness its swaddling band, ¹⁰and prescribed limits for it and set bars and doors, ¹¹and said, ‘Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stayed?’ ¹²“Have you commanded the morning since your days began, and caused the dawn to know its place, ¹³that it might take hold of the skirts of the earth, and the wicked be shaken out of it? ¹⁴It is changed like clay under the seal, and its features stand out like a garment. ¹⁵From the wicked their light is withheld, and their uplifted arm is broken. ¹⁶“Have you entered into the

springs of the sea, or walked in the recesses of the deep? ¹⁷Have the gates of death been revealed to you, or have you seen the gates of deep darkness? ¹⁸Have you comprehended the expanse of the earth? Declare, if you know all this.

Introduction:

Christian singer and songwriter Rich Mullins is probably best known for his song “Awesome God.” He was surprised to find that most people misunderstood the meaning of the song and specifically the phrase “awesome God.” It does not mean that God is awesome in the “great,” “cool,” or even “amazing” way, but in a way that proclaims God much in the same way our catechism does. Our God is a God to be feared and loved, one who has done things our mind cannot fully comprehend.

It is of that kind of awesome that our God reminds us in our Old Testament Reading for today, of Job 38, and continuing in the next chapter, God speaks out of a whirlwind to remind Job of the many things he had done, things that Job cannot even begin to comprehend, things that even our scientific, logical minds cannot fully understand.

By contrast, then, before such an awesome God, who, really and ultimately, are we—Job and each of us?

I. Job may not be quite the man of faith we remember him to be.

To understand this passage, we need to understand a bit more of what’s going on in the Book of Job, and certainly more of Job’s life and how that might actually reflect in actuality our own lives in some ways.

Job is a man who had it all. He had wealth, family, health, and, most important, a strong faith.

But one day the evil one took it all away. Job’s flocks were stolen, his children all died in a freak storm, and to top it all, his body became covered with sores that were so bad that the only way he could find relief was scraping the sores with pottery shards (2:8).

His pain was so hard that his wife told him to curse God and die (2:9), to give up on the one who made him, and to blame the Lord for all his problems. And even his friends were trying to do something else, the opposite of what the wife asked him to do. Three of his friends came, not to console him, but rather to get him to admit that God was punishing him for a hidden sin of some kind or another.

But for a while, Job kept a strong faith, he did not blame God or deny his provision and care. But, eventually he began to waiver, although what he did next wasn't blame God for what he was experiencing, or blame himself for some sin he had committed, instead he wanted to confront, to ask questions and defend himself and present his case to God so that his suffering and torment might stop (31:35–37).

Now when we remember Job, we usually remember him as a man with the strongest faith, persevering under very difficult situations. But as we see in the Scriptures, there was more, for in the end God calls Job out for challenging him.

In fact, God says that Job is one who “darkens counsel by words without knowledge” (38:2).

In other words, Job is speaking of things he knows nothing about! It's almost as if God is saying to Job, “Who are you? You who know nothing—why do you tell me about my creation?” “Who are you to question me?”

Job didn't comprehend the complexity of God's amazing creation, from its vast dimensions to the intimate details of placing the precise limit for the seas for example.

Job thought he understood good and evil, life and death, but God reveals through his questions that Job really had no clue of what he was talking about. Job's problem was not a blatant sin against God's commands, but a confusion about his relationship with God, a confusion about his place in the realm of God's plans, and the Lordship and sovereignty of God.

Job was basing his relationship with God on his own knowledge about who God is and what he has done. He was basing his relationship on his own reasoning based on evidence but on a human perspective not on God's perspective. But what Job did in the end is to place his intellect over his fear or trust or faith in his God, in his plans and his desires, he trusted his reason rather than God's plan.

So today, when we read and hear about these Old Testament characters such as Job, we chastise them for their lack of faith, their imperfections and problems, without realizing how much we are like them, for even in judging Job we too use reason rather than faith and trust in God, and certainly in his will and sovereignty.

II. We, too, may not be quite the people of faith we think we are.

We, too, live more on our knowledge than by our faith. We place our trust in what we know, or think, is right, instead of on the one who is the source of all knowledge and be guided by Him. It happens because the first thought we have in our minds is about us not the power that governs us but that which we possess, our own power and with that our own knowledge. The problem is that our knowledge about ourselves is often skewed as we naturally think of ourselves as being better than we actually are.

And that knowledge is being affected by our knowledge about our creation, which is growing as there are more “discoveries” or so that is what science tells us. The problem is that the more science discovers about creation, the more questions come up, and so our reason begins to whirlwind with our own understating and conclusions.

But in the end it leaves only a mess, like a tornado that sweeps and blends everything in its path.

And we still end up with an incomplete knowledge about God, which He reminds us in Isaiah 55:8 when He says: “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.”

Now, knowledge is very important. That’s why we have schools and Sunday Schools, to teach our children and us, more about God’s creation, ourselves, and our God. But our knowledge is far, far from complete—in fact, it’s quite faulty!—but the good news is that we are not saved by our knowledge of God.

For like Job, God also speaks to each of us, especially those who trust their own reason: “Who are you? You who think you know so much, as if you think that knowledge makes me like you more. If you are trusting in your knowledge, to you I simply say, ‘Who are you?’” how can we plead our case to God if what he responds to us with a “who are you?” We can’t!

III. Why, we are forgiven sinners, of faith no stronger than Job but forgiven no less than every other sinner.

Therefore all we can do is trust grace and the forgiveness of our prideful reason and knowledge. For his forgiveness does not come from our knowledge of God or his creation, but as a gift from the one who created this world and its seas, the one who commands its wind and waves, the one who has become flesh so that in the flesh be able to guide us back to Him.

But to be honest with you, that too sometimes is difficult to understand. For we can’t fully understand how in God’s plan to save mankind, the Son God had to become flesh and ultimately dies on the cross of Calvary, on our behalf.

Likewise we cannot comprehend how this Son of God, Jesus, would rise from the dead, conquering sin, death, and the evil one once for all time. And how is it that water poured over a child or a young person, or an adult, “included in God’s command and combined with God’s Word” would create faith in the promises of our Savior, Jesus.

What God has done goes against all logical explanation, yet it is absolutely true!

It is clear in God’s mind and it is set before us, but also given freely to each one us, so today we believe not on the account of our minds and reason, but on the account of the one who makes it happen, God himself, the Creator and provider. And today as we gather with one another and hear His words, we are also given the opportunity to believe the promise that because of Jesus’ death on the cross, our sins are forgiven and salvation is given. Today we trust that because of Jesus’ resurrection, we have the promise of life forever with him. And we simply hold on to the promise that in our Baptism, we are his!

Conclusion:

And that too is a gift of God, to be able to walk by faith, not sight; by trust in our Savior, not what we think we know. We believe that if God asked, “Who are you?” we could honestly answer, “We are sinners, forgiven and set free by Jesus’ death on the cross.” Trust in him and not on your own understanding.

In His name, amen.