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Journeying with Job. Part 16

Questions from God

Text: Job 38:1- 40:2

Job and his three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar have had ample time to bat theological ideas around. They have discussed Job’s moral life. They have reviewed the helpfulness, or lack thereof, of Job’s friends’ counsel. These four men have talked and talked ...and talked. THEN, God speaks! (38:1).

Don’t miss this part of our textual exploration. We have seen a flood of words, THEN GOD! God answered the querying Job, out of the chaos, out of the storm, out of the whirlwind. Job is no stranger to whirlwind. It was a strong wind that struck the house where Job’s children gathered, killing them all (1:19). Job has known whirlwinds. Now, out of the wind, God speaks. God’s first words to Job are in the form of a rhetorical question that rebukes Job for his arrogance and lack of knowledge. Do you know anybody who speaks words without knowledge? Is that person in your mirror? Job had wanted, in fact nearly demanded, a meeting with God.

Job 13:1-3

*1 “Behold, my eye has seen all this,*

*My ear has heard and understood it.*

***2***

*What you know, I also know;*

*I am not inferior to you.*

***3***

*But I would speak to the Almighty,*

*And I desire to reason with God.*

Job wanted the Almighty to answer him (31:35).

*Oh, that I had one to hear me!*

*Here is my mark.*

*Oh, that the Almighty would answer me...*

Now, Job has his opportunity. However, the usually loquacious (talkative) Job is rendered speechless when God starts a rapid-fire set of questions (38:1-40:2). God’s tone changes. He who commended Job in chapter one (1:8), now sees him as one who darkens the counsel of God and speaks without knowledge (38:2). The questions from God, to Job, fall into several categories:

* Who are you? (38:2 )
* Have you...? (38:12, 16, 18, 22)
* Where were you? (38:4,7, 8-11)
* Can you...? (38:31,32, 33b, 34, 35, 39; 39:1b, 2, 10, 19-20)

The questions end with another rhetorical question about Job’s arrogance and his tendency demand an audience with God.

*Shall the one who contends with the Almighty correct Him?* (40:2)

**Illus.**

Almost daily, I want to correct people. I take photos of signs with misspelled words on them. I listen to people speak and want to correct their speech.

* Recently, I was at a funeral and a gentleman read a resolution from a church. After he read, he said, “A copy of the resolution shall be given to the family and another copy will be placed in the ar-chives of this church.”

I showed great restraint and did not correct the gentleman, but it was difficult.

* Overheard on a MARTA train in April 2015:

“We all have our *turntable* in our minds, about when we expect things to happen.” I’m pretty sure that should be *timetable.*

* I heard a man say, of a situation, “Same reasoning, different *outskirts*”. Outcomes? The same man said that some benefits were ”only for the sick and *shutdowns*”. Shut-ins?

I didn’t correct any of these people but it was difficult. In other settings I have given a gentle correction and many have thanked me. Most of the time, my corrections are either gratefully or begrudgingly received, but received nonetheless.

But Job, standing before God, must confess that he has been guilty of trying to correct God! God doesn’t receive correction.

We must remember that despite our good training and qualitative education, we are mere mortals. We have gifts, skills, and a significant capacity to reason and rationalize. However, we are still humans who dare not get into our Creator’s face as if we could correct him.

Katie Couric, in an interview about her six-part documentary series airing on National Geographic Channel, said that:

Her aim is to highlight issues and allow people to form their own opinions. Then she said, “We’ve been so programmed to have *affirmation* instead of *information”.* (Hemispheres (United Airlines’ inflight magazine). May 2018. p. 50). What God gives Job is information rather than affirmation. God is not telling Job how wonderful Job is. God is reminding Job, and us, that Job is still mortal and God is still immortal; that Job is still finite and God is still infinite; that Job is still ignorant and God still has knowledge of all things.

In 4:3, Eliphaz reminded Job that Job has “instructed many”. Now, he who instructed many is brought up on charges of ignorance, by God Himself.

This set of questions is a call to us all, to:

1. Rejoice that God speaks to humanity. This is not to be ignored or taken lightly. There are sooooooooo many voices coming at us. *Media* speaks to us, shaping our opinions, changing our minds. *We* speak to us, talking to ourselves in self-affirming, self-motivating, self-instructive, sometimes self-destructive words. In addition to those voices, there is God’s who speaks to us out of the whirlwind. He speaks!! Remember that stanza from the hymn, *In the Garden*?

*He speaks and the sound of His voice*

*Is so sweet the birds hush their singing.*

God still speaks to suffering women and men and still overcomes our tendency to spiritually self-medicate.

2. Humble ourselves in view of our minimal knowledge and God’s omniscience. Let’s admit what we don’t know and celebrate God’s knowledge of all things. NBC has a series of public service, educational announcements called *The more you know...*

No matter how much we know, we will always be limited.

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| Knowledge is exploding at such a rate--more than 2000 pages a minute--that even Einstein couldn't keep up. In fact, if you read 24 hours a day, from age 21 to 70, and retained all you read, you would be one and a half million years behind when you finished.  *Campus Life*, February, 1979. |

That ought not depress us. We have keen, inquisitive minds. Hallelujah. Let us, however, remember our places before (and under) our almighty, all-knowing God.

Amen