

# BaptistWay Bible Series for July 1: Who do you think you are, anyway?

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### Who do you think you are, anyway?

- Job 38:1-21; 40:1-2

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Job is a book Christians have studied in many different ways. Job is classified as wisdom literature. One of the ideas wisdom literature holds is divine retribution—the notion that the good receive good and the bad receive bad.

Job, however, is an exception to this rule. The theological idea of the day was not working in Job's life. Job's friends trusted in the idea of divine retribution. They decided Job must have done something wrong; he needed to confess his sins. Job did not see any wrong in his life. He refused to heed their advice and pleaded with God to come to his aid.

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Keep in mind that Job did not know about Satan's role in chapters 1 and 2. Job saw the idea of an orderly universe not working for him.

Job is an example of when theological ideas that we as humans cling to about God do not hold. Job was faced with a dilemma—what to feel, think and do about God's perceived injustice.

Consider for a moment the view of divine retribution. Is it a theory on the part of humans, or is it truth about how God works in humanity? Is God an unjust God that allows bad things to happen to good people? Or is he a loving God we do not completely understand? The idea that presents itself is that human's views of God are not always true to God's character.

As the story of Job unfolds, we see how this particular example plays out. Job's friends beg him to repent; Job reprimands them and cries out to God; God finally answers. It is within God's answers that we will search for not an answer, but an exploration of Job's dealings with justice.

In Job 38:1-21 and 40:1-2, God really challenges Job. One commentator, Gerald Janzen, expresses that God's speech to Job can be summarized by three questions: "Who are you? Where were you? Are you able?" These questions summarize the speech in chapter 38.

God wanted Job to explore the possibility that Job did not understand God on any other level but through his human suffering. God created a vast universe Job was unable to comprehend. Was Job there? Could Job do what

God did?

Job has put God in a box. He has held God to a human standard. Job is realizing human standards are small comparisons to God. What was Job's answer?

Job responses, in Job 40:3-5 and 42: 1-3, are marked with great humility. Janzen concludes that Job answers the questions from God with: "I am nothing. I was not there. I am not able."

When Job was in the very presence of God, he realized he was unworthy. The very power and awe of God's presence sends Job into silence. Job's ultimate answer is that he "spoke of things (he) did not understand" (Job 42:3). Job recognizes at that moment he has dealt unfairly with God. Who was Job to call God out to explain himself? God did not have to explain his glory and reason to any of his creation. This leads to one of many questions: How should we relate to God?

This question is hard to answer. We have formed our ideas and decisions on who and what God is and does. We deal with God on many levels as if he were human. Yet God is God. He cannot be confined to a box. He cannot relate to us as a human would. He relates to us as God.

The exciting beauty of this last statement is that we will spend a lifetime exploring God's relation to us in our lives. The adventure will be exciting, confusing, and yet at times, as in Job's life, it will come with suffering. Our human nature does not want to accept that suffering happens when we are good.

The question is constantly asked, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" Job allowed himself to go through many human emotions toward God. He questioned God's justice and order of creation. God did not have to answer Job, yet God came to Job's aid and counseled with him anyway.

Unfortunately, the story of Job does not conclude that good always will happen to people who serve the Lord. It does conclude that there is hope in God despite our suffering and that humans never fully will comprehend God. Nevertheless, God always will be here because he is God.

Our problem today is not much different from Job's. We tend to think we have God figured out. How foolhardy! Even more risky are our attempts to tell God how to be God! Just who do we think we are? Perhaps if God spoke to us as he did to Job, we too would respond in meekness and submission.

### **Discussion question**

- How was Job wrong to question God?
- How did Job grow in his understanding and relationship with God?
- How can our prayer lives show more meekness and submission to God while still interceding for others?

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