



It probably doesn't come to mind when thinking about Jonah, but the story of Job has some interesting parallels. While they seem to have different attitudes towards God and his ultimate goals, they both are given undesirable tasks, they are put in their places after questioning God, they experience notable revelations of God's nature and character, and they respond in humility and repentance.

This week as we consider the miraculous, the stories of Jonah and Jesus' encounter with the Pharisees force us to consider some of the common cultural assumptions that we often accept without thinking. The first assumption is that we know a lot, perhaps even everything we need to know. Even as the Pharisees consider themselves qualified to question Jesus, Job and his friends act as if they are qualified to judge God's actions. Job sees himself as righteous and questions God's justice while his friends believe that they know God's standards and question Job's behavior. Job's friends are simply wrong, and even Job has a narrow view of God.

God points out Job's (and our) ignorance with a very direct monologue in Job 38:1-40:2 and 40:6-41:34. For four chapters God questions Job about where he has been, what he has done, what he can do, and what he knows in order to make the point that only God knows all things. Job is not the only one with the problem. They had the same problem at Babel, and we have had the same problem ever since. No matter how much we know, God always knows more.

The second assumption is the notion that whatever happens is about us. The Pharisees demand a sign from Jesus because they think that he should have to prove himself to them just as Job questions God's actions toward him. Instead, what God does in the world, including what we describe as miracles, all points to God and his purposes. God asks if lightning reports to Job (38:35) and if the wild ox serves him (39:12). The obvious answer is "No." Even as Jesus doesn't have to answer the Pharisees, God doesn't have to answer us. Instead, God says "I will question you, and you shall answer me!" (40:7).

God's response to Job renders obvious the third assumption we often make, that we have authority. The temptation today is to say that we know so much more than the people of Job's and Jesus' day, and we can do much of what is described in Job, like taming wild animals and understanding the weather. While God has given us dominion, it still remains subject to his approval. Even as Job 38:14 describes creation as the wax on which God creates his impression, we recognize that we are wax, not the stamp or the one wielding it. Even if we understand everything there is to know, we are part of the creation, not the creator himself.

Discussion Questions

Why is it often so important to us to be able to explain events and circumstances? What role does humility play in helping us understand the truth?

Why did Jesus heal people when they would inevitably die anyway? Should we pray for healing today, and if so, why might God choose to heal us?

If Jesus' death and resurrection is the ultimate miracle and God's point in it all, what miracles should we be praying for in our lives and in the lives of those around us today?