

April 6

Scriptures: Read Job 41 & 42

Key Verse: “And the Lord restored Job’s losses when he prayed for his friends. Indeed the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.” (Job 42:10)

Overview

Like the behemoth, the “leviathan” was a real animal created by God and its identity is also unknown today; they both may be extinct. Speculation of the leviathan’s identity has included the crocodile, a sea dragon/serpent, or a type of dinosaur. The description of the leviathan is probably exaggerated for the sake of poetic imagery and emphasis, which is common to ancient (and modern) middle-eastern poems (e.g. 41:18-21; it’s warm breath on top of the cold sea would have resembled smoke). It is clear, however, that just as the behemoth was the most feared beast of the land, leviathan was the most feared of the sea. God used these magnificent and powerful beasts to illustrate His omnipotence, for He, as their creator, had infinitely greater power and strength than they. It would be a foolish act for a mere man to stand against these beasts, just as it would be an even greater folly to stand against God (41:10).

All the animals God described lacked understanding (especially the ostrich. 39:13-17), and it is against their nature to be submissive. Only through force has man been able to tame a few animals. Unlike lowly animals, God gave human beings reason, understanding, choice, and a never-dying soul. We must choose to willingly submit ourselves to God, for He will not use force with us. God could have terrified Job and forcefully, harshly, and very quickly caused him to repent, but He would never do this; rather, He lovingly took much time to speak and reason with Job, so that he might gain a fuller understanding and then choose to love and submit himself to God. Although He never directly answered Job’s questions concerning the “whys” of his suffering, the fact that God condescended to speak with him showed Job that God was indeed gracious and loving. It was no longer important that he know the “whys” of it all.

When God gave Job the opportunity to respond, Job began by giving mental assent to the fact that God was indeed all-powerful. He confessed his lack of understanding and admitted that God’s communication with him had enlightened him to the truth. If Job had never suffered, he would have never come to know God better. Job said, “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear”, meaning that in the past he had only a partial understanding of God. He then went on to say, “but now my eye sees You”, meaning he now had a fuller understanding of God. This knowledge of God caused him to see himself as he actually was; not only vile (40:4) but abhorrent, for he recognized his sin of rebellion against God, and this led to his sincere repentance and humility before God (“in dust and ashes”, 42:6).

The Lord was pleased with Job, but still not pleased with Job’s friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, who had falsely accused him. Like Job, they too heard God’s words; but unlike Job, they did not see their own sinfulness, nor did they humble themselves and repent before God. Therefore, God addressed Eliphaz (as the eldest, he was the spokesman) and rebuked all three men. Elihu was not mentioned, since he did not share in their folly. The three men had boastfully claimed to understand the purposes of God (cf. Romans 11:34), but in so doing, they judged Job

wrongly (without mercy, love, or understanding), and they were harder on Job than was God (cf. Romans 14:4).

Four times in this passage, God referred to Job as “My servant Job” (42:7-8), which was a public justification of his righteousness. It must have thrilled him to hear those words from the Almighty; this made all his suffering worthwhile. Job’s righteousness was also reaffirmed in God’s remedy for the sinfulness of his three friends, as Job was to mediate for their sacrificial offering, which was a public expression of their repentance (Note: this was before the Law of Moses). Interestingly, Job, whom they had hurt, was told by God to pray for them, since God would now accept his prayers (42:8). In praying for them, Job showed that he forgave them, and this was God’s desire. Once Job forgave and prayed for God’s blessing upon his friends, then God restored all his losses (42:10). The importance of forgiving those who have hurt you is clear in this passage. When Job’s bitterness and anger against his friends was dispelled, God could once again shower Job with blessings. He was restored in every area of his life: friendships, family, possessions, prestige, and a long life; but the greatest blessing was his spiritual restoration. Job’s faith had been tested, but he emerged from the fire purer and stronger (cf. Psalm 66:10-12).

The book of Job ends on a triumphant note. Let us remember that Job’s sufferings originated as an attack of Satan in a challenge to God (1:9-12), but God was victorious, for although Job questioned God’s justice and fell in despair, he never cursed God as Satan had claimed he would. Significantly, Job’s deliverance from the hands of Satan and the salvation of Job’s friends was marked by the offering of a sacrifice, which typified the future Messianic sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Righteousness can only come through His redemptive work in our lives.

Prayer

Father, it is only in the receiving of Your forgiveness and love that we are able to forgive and love others. We long to know You better this day, that we, in turn, might better serve You.