

Journey INTO THE Bible

Supplemental Material

Lesson Six: Job 42:7–17

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“O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!” (Romans 11:33). These words are found in Paul’s instruction to the members of the Christian community in Rome. It is in this same passage that he asks: “For who has known the mind of the Lord?” (Romans 11:34). This theme of the incomprehensibility of God is written in bold letters throughout the entire Bible. The drama of Job attests to the truth of this tenet of faith. The readers may have known that Job’s afflictions were a test from God, but Job never knew, not even after he had been vindicated and reinstated. Who has known the mind of God?

What is one to do in such circumstances? The story of Job suggests that all one can do is cling to truth as one understands it and trust in God. This is what Job did, even though from the perspective of traditional understanding, he appeared to be obstinate in his error. In Job, the words for “faith” and “trust” are used interchangeably. A look at both of these words will throw light on the meaning intended by this author.

The Hebrew word *‘aman* is the root for words such as faith, faithfulness, steadfastness, truth, and so forth. All of these words in some way relate to the idea of certainty and dependability. These terms generally apply to God, who is totally dependable. When used to re-

fer to others, these terms usually suggest that God has somehow influenced their lives and can now expect that they too can be considered dependable. Though the ideas of both faith and truth are included here, they refer to characteristics of God or of human beings, not to propositions to be believed as the phrase ‘articles of truth’ might suggest.

The Hebrew word *bātah* is the root for words such as safety, trust, and confidence. Unlike faithfulness, which belongs by right to God, trust is a human trait. It implies a sense of well-being and security that results from reliance on someone who is trustworthy or dependable. In the Bible, that is, of course, God. Just as biblical faith is more than acceptance of a set of religious truths, so biblical trust does not connote a volitional response to revelation. One might say that biblical trust is less a trust *that* something will occur, than it is a trust *in* someone.

Turning to the Book of Job, we can say that Job trusted in God because he believed that God was dependable. Initially he seemed to have presumed that he should be able to understand. However, in his last response he acknowledged that this presumption was misplaced and that he had “dealt with great things that I do not understand.” Job might very well have declared: “O the depths of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable are his ways” (Romans 11:33).