IS IT WRONG TO QUESTION GOD? - “God I Have A Question!”

Intro:
A. A few years ago these black billboards started popping up all over the country - that asked questions - signed simply as God.
1. Where were you yesterday - In my house? Etc.... simple statements that really makes one to think.

B. But, this morning I want to pose a question to you - IS IT WONG TO QUESTION GOD?
1. We had this discussion in brief during one of our Revelation bible classes - as to whether we would want answers from God - If we made it to Heaven.
   a. Mary said in that study - “I have A lot of questions I would want answered” - and I’m sure she is speaking of all of us in some way - but “If we are in Heaven - would we really want to know?”
   b. It is my opinion that the answer is - IF we are there in Heaven - why would be care?
2. But, we are not there NOW, so there are lots of questions we have - Mary and myself included - that we would like to have answered - so is it WRONG TO QUESTION GOD?

C. I believe all such questions are answered in God’s Word - we have been noting from the scriptures questions God wants us to ask ourselves - but once again do the scriptures forbid or allow us to ask God questions!
1. Job Did! - others asked Jesus questions - so my understanding is NO it is not wrong to ASK - but the motive and attitude behind our asking must be checked.
2. Is it.......? Will it...? Why can’t I....? all must be checked with regards to our relationship with God.

II. GOD I HAVE A QUESTION? - EXAMPLES of such...
A. Jeremiah: “Why does the way of the wicked prosper?”
1. During his work as a prophet he asks, “Why does the way of the wicked prosper and thrive?”
   (Jeremiah 12:1-4 - NKJV) ---- 1 Righteous are You, O Lord, when I plead with You; Yet let me talk with You about Your judgments. Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why are those happy who deal so treacherously? 2 You have planted them, yes, they have taken root; They grow, yes, they bear fruit. You are near in their mouth But far from their mind. 3 But You, O Lord, know me; You have seen me, And You have tested my heart toward You. Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, And prepare them for the day of slaughter. 4 How long will the land mourn, And the herbs of every field wither? The beasts and birds are consumed, For the wickedness of those who dwell there, Because they said, “He will not see our final end.”
   a. Jeremiah was confused – In his perspective everything was going right in the life of the wicked, but not the righteous
   b. Jeremiah’s sincerity: “You know… You see me” – He was truly trying to be faithful and his life was full of difficulties
2. A surprising answer – Strengthen yourself! (Jeremiah 1:5-6 NKJV) ---- 5 “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.” 6 Then said I: “Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth.”
   a. Vs 7-9 ---- But the Lord said to me: “Do not say, ’I am a youth,’ For you shall go to all to whom I send you, And whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of their faces, For I am with you to deliver you,” says the Lord.
   b. No theological discussion, no correction of Jeremiah’s point of view…Those explanations aren’t what he really needs!
   c. God challenged Jeremiah - Jer 12 – Are you ready to run with the horses? Are you ready for the thickets? It will get harder!
d. He would also be facing opposition from his own family.
e. So he needed to strengthen his faith, determination, & strength

B. Job struggled with this: Why do the wicked enjoy such great prosperity (Job 21:7-18 NKJV) --7

Why do the wicked live and become old, Yes, become mighty in power? 8 Their descendants are established with them in their sight, And their offspring before their eyes. 9 Their houses are safe from fear, Neither is the rod of God upon them. 10 Their bull breeds without failure; Their cow calves without miscarriage. 11 They send forth their little ones like a flock, And their children dance. 12 They sing to the tambourine and harp, And rejoice to the sound of the flute. 13 They spend their days in wealth, And in a moment go down to the grave. 14 Yet they say to God, ‘Depart from us, For we do not desire the knowledge of Your ways. 15 Who is the Almighty, that we should serve Him? And what profit do we have if we pray to Him?’ 16 Indeed their prosperity is not in their hand; The counsel of the wicked is far from me. 17 ‘How often is the lamp of the wicked put out? How often does their destruction come upon them, The sorrows God distributes in His anger? 18 They are like straw before the wind, And like chaff that a storm carries away.

1. We often feel like Job – Our trials blur our vision leaving our perception of the true lives of the wicked very skewed
2. “Grass is greener on the other side” mentality – Job’s world was crashing down, so everyone else looked great
3. Notice he paints the wicked as though they were problem free …an inaccurate representation of their reality.
   a. Jeremiah did run with the horses! He shows trust in God and presses forward in faith (Jeremiah 20:7-11 NKJV) - 7 O Lord, You induced me, and I was persuaded; You are stronger than I, and have prevailed. I am in derision daily; Everyone mocks me. 8 For when I spoke, I cried out; I shouted, “Violence and plunder!” Because the word of the Lord was made to me A reproach and a derision daily. 9 Then I said, “I will not make mention of Him, Nor speak anymore in His name.” But His word was in my heart like a burning fire Shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, And I could not. 10 For I heard many mocking: “Fear on every side!” “Report,” they say, “and we will report it!” All my acquaintances watched for my stumbling, saying, “Perhaps he can be induced; Then we will prevail against him, And we will take our revenge on him.” 11 But the Lord is with me as a mighty, awesome One. Therefore my persecutors will stumble, and will not prevail. They will be greatly ashamed, for they will not prosper. Their everlasting confusion will never be forgotten.
   b. When trials blur our vision, we must take care to strengthen our faith! (Colossians 2:6-7 NKJV) ---- 6 As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, 7 rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.

C. Jonah: “God, is this not what I said?”
1. Background: Jonah’s reluctant ministry to the city of Ninevah (Jonah 1:1-3; 3:1-5, 10)
   a. Jonah 1:1-3 (NKJV) - 1 Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, 2 “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me.” 3 But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.
   b. Jonah 3:1-5 (NKJV) - 1 Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, 2 “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you.” 3 So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey in extent. 4 And Jonah began
to enter the city on the first day’s walk. Then he cried out and said, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” 5 So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them.

(2) **Jonah 3:10** (NKJV) - 10 Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.

b. Ninevah was the capital city of the enemy of God’s people
(1) Preaching to them meant giving them a second chance
(2) The whole city repents… Instead of rejoicing, Jonah spirals into an emotional funk… He’s bitter and angry about it

2. Reflecting on what took place, he asks, “O Lord, is this not what I said…” **(Jonah 4:1-3 NKJV)** 
---- 1 But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry. 2 So he prayed to the Lord, and said, “Ah, Lord, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm. 3 Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live!”

a. Like saying, “God, is this not exactly what I said would happen? I knew this would happen… That’s why I ran away!”

b. The basis of his understanding is a good appreciation of God’s grace, mercy, and love. Jonah knew this was His God!

c. His problem was his heart was not inline with God’s heart and this difference caused him to not submit to God’s will

3. God’s answer is very simple: “Do you do well to be angry?” **(Jonah 4:4)** - **Jonah 4:4** (NKJV)

4 Then the Lord said, “Is it right for you to be angry?”

a. Like saying, “Is your anger a good thing? Is your attitude right? Are you doing right by moping in your displeasure?”

b. A convicting question! What is Jonah supposed to answer? Even in his anger, the answer is obvious to Job.

c. Job was wrong for being anger, but the ultimate object of his anger was the grace, mercy, and love of the Lord.

4. How do we respond when God’s will is different from our will? Anger or submission? **(James 1:19-21 NKJV)** ---- 19 So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; 20 for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. 21 Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

D. Lastly there is Habakkuk, a prophet filled with troubling questions

1. Concerning his NAME - It means "Embrace"

a. "His name, as Luther well puts it, speaks as one who took his nation to his heart, comforted it and held it up, as one embraces and presses to his bosom a poor weeping child, calming and console it with good hope." (Geikie)

b. His MESSAGE: the book easily falls into three sections
(1) A "burden" - **Hab 1:1-2:1**
(2) A "vision" - **Hab 2:2-20**
(3) A "prayer" - **Hab 3:1-19**

2. We note an immediate difference between Habakkuk and other prophets...

a. Instead of taking the Lord's message directly to the people (as do most prophets) - He takes the complaint of the people directly to the Lord, representing them in the complaint.

b. As he does so, it has been said that Habakkuk goes "From A Sob To A Song"
3. In this process he begins with a "burden" as found in the first section of his message...

a. HIS "BURDEN": FAITH GRAPPLING WITH A PROBLEM

(1) THE PROPHET RAISES A QUESTION...Habakkuk: “Why haven’t you answered my prayers?”

(a) Habakkuk looks at all of the evil and says, “How long shall I cry for help and you not hear?” (Hab 1:1-2) - Habakkuk 1:1-2 (NKJV) - 1 The burden which the prophet Habakkuk saw. 2 O Lord, how long shall I cry, And You will not hear? Even cry out to You, “Violence!” And You will not save.

b. He was greatly distressed over the presence and prominence of wickedness in his society…

Wickedness is everywhere!

c. He is sick of sin – Violence, iniquity, wrong, strife, contention

d. Truth and justice are immobilized – Law is there, but its not executed. Righteous people are influenced by wicked.

e. He has been praying about it, but hasn’t seen any response

(a) He laments over apparent rule of wickedness and violence

(b) How can the Lord justify His apparent indifference to such - things? - Habakkuk 1:3-4 (NKJV) 3 Why do You show me iniquity, And cause me to see trouble? For plundering and violence are before me; There is strife, and contention arises. 4 Therefore the law is powerless, And justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; Therefore perverse judgment proceeds.

(2) GOD'S ANSWER...

(a) He is not indifferent!

(b) He is doing something that will be hard to fathom - Habakkuk 1:5-11 (NKJV) ---- 5 “Look among the nations and watch— Be utterly astounded! For I will work a work in your days Which you would not believe, though it were told you. 6 For indeed I am raising up the Chaldeans, A bitter and hasty nation Which marches through the breadth of the earth, To possess dwelling places that are not theirs. 7 They are terrible and dreadful; Their judgment and their dignity proceed from themselves. 8 Their horses also are swifter than leopards, And more fierce than evening wolves. Their chargers charge ahead; Their cavalry comes from afar; They fly as the eagle that hastens to eat. 9 “They all come for violence; Their faces are set like the east wind. They gather captives like sand. 10 They scoff at kings, And princes are scorned by them. They deride every stronghold, For they heap up earthen mounds and seize it. 11 Then his mind changes, and he transgresses; He commits offense, Ascribing this power to his god.”

i) Raising up the Chaldeans (Babylon) to execute His judgment

ii) Using a violent nation that arrogantly thinks it is serving its own god (and purpose)

f. THE PROPHET'S SECOND QUESTION...

(1) How can a holy God employ such an impure and godless agent? - Habakkuk 1:12-17 (NKJV) ---- 12 Are You not from everlasting, O Lord my God, my Holy One? We shall not die. O Lord, You have appointed them for judgment; O Rock, You have marked them for correction. 13 You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, And cannot look on wickedness. Why do You look on those who deal treacherously, And hold Your tongue when the wicked devours A person more righteous than he? 14 Why do You make men like fish of the sea, Like creeping things that have no ruler over them? 15 They take up all of them with a hook, They catch them in their net, And gather them in their dragnet. Therefore they rejoice and are glad. 16 Therefore they sacrifice to their net, And burn
incense to their dragnet; Because by them their share is sumptuous And their food plentiful. 17 Shall they therefore empty their net, And continue to slay nations without pity?

(a) This is hard for Habakkuk to understand, but he will watch to see what the Lord will say to him - Habakkuk 2:1 (NKJV) - 1 I will stand my watch And set myself on the rampart, And watch to see what He will say to me, And what I will answer when I am corrected.

(b) [Indeed, it is a heavy "burden" for Habakkuk. God has answered his first question by saying He will use the Chaldeans to punish the wickedness and violence in Judah. But the Chaldeans are wicked also, how can God use them?]

(2) Habakkuk receives his answer in the form of a "vision"...]

g. HIS "VISION": FAITH GRASPING THE SOLUTION

(1) GOD'S ANSWER: FIRST, THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY HIS FAITH...

(a) Habakkuk is to write what God reveals to him - Habakkuk 2:2-3 (NKJV) ---- 2 Then the Lord answered me and said: “Write the vision And make it plain on tablets, That he may run who reads it. 3 For the vision is yet for an appointed time; But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; Because it will surely come, It will not tarry.

(b) The proud is not upright; but the just shall live by his faith - Habakkuk 2:4 (NKJV) 4 “Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith.

(2) GOD'S ANSWER: SECOND, GOD WILL JUDGE THE PROUD...

(a) Woe to the proud possessed with the lust of conquest and plunder - Habakkuk 2:5-8 (NKJV) ---- 5 “Indeed, because he transgresses by wine, He is a proud man, And he does not stay at home. Because he enlarges his desire as hell, And he is like death, and cannot be satisfied, He gathers to himself all nations And heaps up for himself all peoples. 6 “Will not all these take up a proverb against him, And a taunting riddle against him, and say, ‘Woe to him who increases What is not his—how long? And to him who loads himself with many pledges’. 7 Will not your creditors rise up suddenly? Will they not awaken who oppress you? And you will become their booty. 8 Because you have plundered many nations, All the remnant of the people shall plunder you, Because of men’s blood And the violence of the land and the city, And of all who dwell in it.

(b) Woe to their efforts to build a permanent empire through cruelty and godless gain - Habakkuk 2:9-11 (NKJV) ---- 9 “Woe to him who covets evil gain for his house, That he may set his nest on high, That he may be delivered from the power of disaster! 10 You give shameful counsel to your house, Cutting off many peoples, And sin against your soul. 11 For the stone will cry out from the wall, And the beam from the timbers will answer it.

(c) Woe to those who build cities with bloodshed - Habakkuk 2:12-14 (NKJV) - 12 “Woe to him who builds a town with bloodshed, Who establishes a city by iniquity! 13 Behold, is it not of the Lord of hosts That the peoples labor to feed the fire, And nations weary themselves in vain? 14 For the earth will be filled With the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, As the waters cover the sea.

(d) Woe to those with cruelty in their treatment of those they conquered - Habakkuk 2:15-17 (NKJV) - 15 “Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbor, Pressing him to your bottle, Even to make him drunk, That you may look on his nakedness! 16 You are filled with shame instead of glory. You also—drink! And be exposed as
uncircumcised! The cup of the Lord’s right hand will be turned against you, And utter shame will be on your glory. 17 For the violence done to Lebanon will cover you, And the plunder of beasts which made them afraid, Because of men’s blood And the violence of the land and the city, And of all who dwell in it.

(e) Woe to those given over to idolatry - Habakkuk 2:18-20 (NKJV) ---- 18 “What profit is the image, that its maker should carve it, The molded image, a teacher of lies, That the maker of its mold should trust in it, To make mute idols? 19 Woe to him who says to wood, ‘Awake!’ To silent stone, ‘Arise! It shall teach!’ Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, Yet in it there is no breath at all. 20 “But the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him.”

i) Who worship that in which there is no breath at all

ii) While the Lord is in His holy temple, before whom the earth should keep silence

(f) The answer to Habakkuk’s second question appears to be this: While God may use a wicked nation like Babylon to punish the wickedness of Judah, He will not let Babylon’s wickedness go unpunished either!

i) In the meantime, the just (righteous) person will live by his faith in God, which Habakkuk illustrates with his “prayer”...

h. Habakkuk thinks God is sitting by idly and silently as the wicked destroy the righteous (Habakkuk 1:12-13 NKJV) - 12 Are You not from everlasting, O Lord my God, my Holy One? We shall not die. O Lord, You have appointed them for judgment; O Rock, You have marked them for correction. 13 You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, And cannot look on wickedness. Why do You look on those who deal treacherously, And hold Your tongue when the wicked devours A person more righteous than he?

4. God’s answer: “I’m doing a work in your days (vs. 5-6)
   a. God reveals that He isn’t idle or silent, but is doing a great work
   b. Not just working a plan, but a work that would blow his mind!
   c. Great work was taking place even though he couldn’t see it

5. God answers Habakkuk’s second question: “Wait… their end will come” (Hab 2:2-5)
   a. “Still the vision awaits its appointed time…” – The problem was that the timing was not right yet. Only God knew this.
   b. God prepares him that it might take a long time to get fulfilled…He had to wait. When it does, it will be sure and swift.
   c. His prayers were getting answered, but he had to be patient.

E. When it seems our prayers are going unheard or unanswered, we must remember that God does answer our prayers, but in His time and in His way!

1. (Ecc 3:11; Romans 11:32-36)
   a. Ecclesiastes 3:11 (NKJV) - 11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end.
   b. Romans 11:32-36 (NKJV) - 32 For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all. 33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! 34 “For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?” 35 “Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?” 36 For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

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III. In Conclusion:
   A. “IN HIS TIME” - many of the questions we can ask of God - is answered in HIS TIME.
   B. In many false religions, people are told not to question what goes on. Questions are treated as
      insubordination.
      1. But God invites questions because in answering question there is an opportunity to learn.
         a. "'Come now, and let us reason together,' Says the LORD, 'Though your sins are like scarlet,
            They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool"
            (Isaiah 1:18).
         b. "'Present your case,' says the LORD. 'Bring forth your strong reasons,' says the King of
            Jacob" (Isaiah 41:21).
      2. Why? The answer is found in the verse before: “That they may see and know, and consider and
         understand together, that the hand of the LORD has done this, and the Holy One of Israel has
         created it” (Isaiah 41:20).
   C. Here is the best question you can ever ask of God ---- WHAT WILL YOU HAVE ME TO DO?
      1. Saul of Tarsus asked that question in Acts 9:1-6 and we must ask that very same question today.
      2. God has answered just as He answered all the various questions we have looked at today.