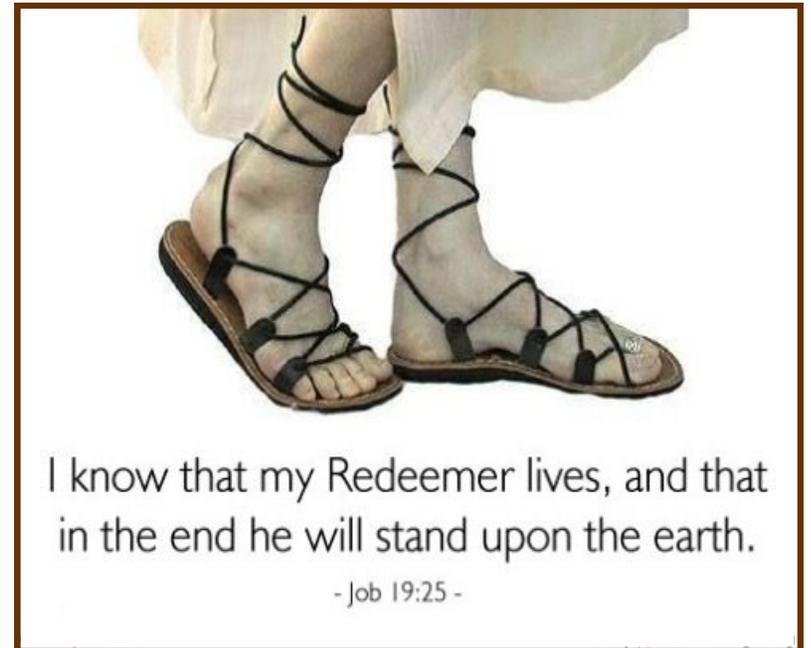


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Job

Chapter Nineteen:



I know that my Redeemer lives, and that
in the end he will stand upon the earth.

- Job 19:25 -

Job Answers Baldath

*The commentary on the Book of Job, is by Saint Thomas Aquinas and was translated by Brian Mulladay and edited by Rev. Joseph Kenny, O.P.
The book shows how human affairs are ruled by divine providence using probable arguments.*

CHAPTER NINETEEN: JOB ANSWERS BALDATH

The First Lesson: A New Description of his Misfortune

1 Then Job answered and said: 2 How long are you going to afflict my soul and injure me with your discussions? 3 Behold, you have confused me ten times and you do not blush in oppressing me. 4 If without doubt I have erred, my ignorance will be with me. 5 But you raise yourselves against me and you charge me with my disgraces. 6 At least now, understand that God has not afflicted me with right judgment and he has girded me about with his scourges. 7 Behold! I will cry aloud while I am suffering attack and no one will hear me; I will cry out and there is no one to judge. 8 He has obstructed my path and I cannot pass across and he placed darkness on my footpath. 9 He stripped me of my glory and he took the crown from my head. 10 He destroyed me on all sides and I perish, and he has taken away my hope like an uprooted tree. 11 His fury has been roused against me, and so he has considered me his enemy. 12 His hired robbers came all at once, they have cut a path for themselves through me and they besieged my tent all around. 13 He has made my brothers far from me and my acquaintances turned from me like strangers. 14 My relatives abandoned me and those who knew me have forgotten me. 15 The tenants of my house and maids have considered me as a stranger and I have been like a foreigner in their eyes. 16 I called my servant and he did not answer me. I begged him with my mouth. 17 My wife shuddered at my breath and I begged the sons of my loins. 18 Even the foolish despised me, and when I left them, they disparaged me. 19 Once my counselors, they despised me and he whom I loved most is against me. 20 My bones clung to my skin, after my flesh was consumed. Only my lips stand around my teeth. 21 Have pity on me, have pity on me, you, at least, who are my friends, because the hand of the Lord has struck me. 22 Why do you persecute me like God and glut yourselves on flesh?

After these things as premises about the cause, the time, the manner of the resurrection, and the glory and identity of those who will rise, he then adds, "This my hope has been put in my heart," as if he should say: For my hope is not in earthly things which you promise vainly, but in the future glory of the resurrection. He says clearly, "has been put in my heart," to show that he held this hope concealed not only in words, but also in his heart; not doubtfully, but most firmly; not like something of little consequence, but as something most precious. For what is hidden in the heart is possessed in a secret way, is firmly held and is considered dear.

Thus after he has shown the depth of the hope which he had in God, he rejects their false accusations which they sought to make against him as if he had rejected the hope and fear of God by not putting his hope in temporal things. So he then says, "Why, then, do you now say: Let us persecute him?" namely, as though I despair of God or do not fear God, "and let us find the root of the word against him," by condemning my speech as though I have denied the providence of God? I do not deny, but assert, this providence, saying that rewards and punishments are prepared by God for man also after this life. So he then says, "Flee, then, from the face of the sword," of divine revenge reserved in the future life for you, even if you flourish in temporal prosperity; "for his sword is the avenger of evils," i.e., the vengeance which he will properly take after death. "Know there is a judgment," not only in this life, but also after this life in the resurrection of good and wicked men.

END OF JOB CHAPTER 19

There were other men who said that men will rise by resuming not an earthly body, but some kind of heavenly body. To exclude this he then says, "I will be surrounded again with my own skin." He expressly says this because he had said above (v.20) that only the skin had remained around his bones. In this way of speaking he assigns the explanation (ratio) of the resurrection, namely, that the soul does not always remain divested of its very own skin. Again there were some who said that the soul will resume the same body it had put aside, but according to the same condition, so that it would need food and drink and would exercise the other fleshly works of this life. But he excludes this saying then, "and in my flesh I shall see God." For it is clear that the flesh of man is corruptible according to the state of the present life. As Wisdom says, "The body which is corrupted weighs down the spirit." (9:15) and so no one can see God while living in this mortal flesh, but the flesh which the soul will resume in the resurrection will certainly be the same in substance, but will have incorruptibility by a divine gift, according to what is said by Paul, "This corruptible must put on incorruption." (1 Cor.15:53) Therefore, that flesh will be of this latter condition because it in no way will impede the soul from being able to see God, but rather will be completely subject to the soul. Porphyry, not knowing this said, "The soul must flee the body to become happy," as though the soul and not man will see God. To exclude this Job places, "whom I myself will see," as though he should say: Not only will my soul see God but "I myself" who subsist from body and soul. To indicate that the body will be a participant in that vision in its own proper way he adds, "and my eyes will behold him," not because the eyes of the body would see the divine essence, but because the eyes of the body will see God made man. They will also see the glory of God shining in created things as Augustine says at the end of *The City of God*. That one believe that man must be restored the same in number and not only the same in species in order to be restored to see God he says, "and not another," in number. This is so that one might not believe that he expects to return to the kind of life which Aristotle describes in II *De Generatione* saying that each corruptible substance which has been moved will be restored in species, but not in the same number.

In the previous discourse Baldath seems to have intended two things. First, he intended to refute Job for stupidity, pride and anger. (18:2) He intended to afflict him by this like his other friends had, and so Job says, "How long are you going to afflict my soul?" Second, Baldath intended to confirm his opinion that the adversities of the present life arise in return for sins which in fact he had explained at length by enumerating the different adversities without introducing other proof. (18:4) Regarding this Job says, "and injure me with your discussions," that is, fatigue me with words, but not convincing proofs? It is tolerable if someone speaks against his own friend once, but if the man says the same things over and over he seems to be firmly established in malice, and so he then says, "Behold! You have confused me ten times," both by speaking yourselves and by listening to me with some anger. Before this present response, Job is found to have spoken five times if we begin from when he said, "Cursed be the day I was born." (3:13) and the friends are found to have answered him five times. Even if they should not cease to afflict the one they were tormenting for friendship's sake, they at least could stop afflicting him because they were refuting and so he then says, "and you do not blush in oppressing me," for you wear me out as much with your reproaches as with your lengthy discourses. Among other reproaches Baldath seems to have blamed him for ignorance, when he had said, "Understand first and then we will speak." (18:2) The friends certainly should have tolerated this ignorance. He should have been excused because of it, but he should not have been reproached with it especially in a time of adversity, and so he then says, "If without doubt I have erred, my ignorance will be with me," as if he should say: Nothing burdens you, but only me, and so it does not befit you to reproach me for ignorance in the midst of adversity. So he then says, "But you raise yourselves up against me," showing your excellence, "and you blame me for my disgraces," i.e., which only concern me and do not burden others.

After he begins with these things which concern the refutation of his friends, he goes on to pursue his chief proposition with the intention of showing what they were saying is false: that present adversities always arise because of past sins. Immediately at the beginning he draws an unfitting conclusion from this supposition saying, "At least now, understand that God has not have afflicted me with right judgment," as if to say: If adversities only arise because of sins, the judgment of God by which he afflicted me gravely when I did not sin gravely is not equitable. He says, "At least now," because up to this time, he had not yet enumerated his adversities as particularly as he does now. He says that he has not only been afflicted with adversities, but also hemmed in by them so that he cannot find a way to escape them, and so the text continues, "and he has girded me about with his scourges," because the scourges themselves have taken away the road to the cures, and he begins to pursue this second point first. Cure can be found in adversities first through human aid in two ways. In one way in the deed itself, for example, when someone is violently oppressed by someone else and he receives aid from another. He rejects this saying, "Behold, I will cry aloud while I am suffering attack and no one will hear me," as if he should say: if I cry aloud against those who oppress me violently, no one would heed so that he comes to my aid. In another way after the deed, for example, when someone who has suffered injury complains to a judge who restores and vindicates him by his sentence. He rejects this saying, "I will cry out and there is no one to judge," that is, if I cried out in complaint, there would be no judge present who would free me by his judgment. Second, a cure is found in adversities by the man himself who escapes adversities in two ways. In the first way, by his power, and he excludes this saying, "He has obstructed my path and I cannot pass," as if he should say: He has placed so many impediments to my advance that I cannot remove them. In another way by prudence, and to exclude this he applies the text, "and he placed darkness on my footpath," so that I could not see how I must go forward.

He shows what the discourses are he would like to be preserved with such great diligence adding, "For I know that my redeemer lives." He clearly attributes this to the manner of a cause. Things which we are not sure of we are not anxious to commit to memory, and so he clearly says, "For I know," namely by the certitude of faith. This hope is about the glory of the future resurrection, concerning which he first assigns the cause when he says, "my redeemer lives." Here we must consider that man, who was established as immortal by God, incurred death through sin, according to Romans, "Through one man sin entered the world, and through sin, death." (5:12) Job foresaw through the spirit of faith that the human race must be redeemed from this sin through Christ. Christ redeemed us from sin by death, dying for us, but he did not so die that he was consumed by death, because although he died according to his humanity, yet he could not die according to his divinity. From the life of the divinity, the humanity has also been restored by rising up to life again, according to what is said in 2 Cor., "For although he was crucified because of our infirmity, yet he lives by the power of God." (13:4) The life of the Risen Christ, moreover will be diffused to all men in the general resurrection, and so in the same place the Apostle Paul puts, "For we are weak in him, but we will live in him by the power of God in us," (11:4) and so the Lord says according to John, "The dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear it will live: for just as the Father has life in himself, so he gave it to the Son also to have life in himself." (5:25-26) Thus the primordial cause of the resurrection of man is the life of the Son of God, which did not take its beginning from Mary, as the Ebionites said, but always was, according to Hebrews, "Jesus Christ yesterday, today, and forever." (13:8) Therefore he clearly does not say, "My redeemer will live," but, "lives." In this cause he foretells the future resurrection and he determines its time when he then puts, "and I shall arise on the very last day from the earth." Here one must reflect that some men posited that the motion of the heavens and this state of the world would endure forever, and they maintained that after a fixed number of revolutions of years, when the stars return to the same places, dead men would be restored to life. Since a day is caused by a motion of the heavens, if this motion of the heavens will endure forever, there will be no very last day. Thus to remove the aforementioned error he then clearly says, "on the very last day," and this is consonant with the statement of the Lord, who says in John, "I will raise him up on the very last day (novissimo die)." (6:40)

Job had said above that his hope had been taken away, “like an uprooted tree.” (19:10) He certainly said this referring to the hope of recovering temporal prosperity, to which the friends urged him many times. But he showed in many ways above (vv.11-20) that he ought not to have this hope by reducing their arguments to various unfitting conclusions. Now he clearly declares his intention to show that he had not said these things before in despair of God, but because he bore a higher hope about Him, which was not even related to present goods, but to future goods. Because he was about to speak about great, wondrous, and certain things, he first shows his desire that the thought he is about to express would endure in the faith of his descendants. We transmit our words and their meaning to our descendants through the function of writing. So he says, “Who would grant me that my words be written down?” namely, what I am about to say about the hope which I have fixed in God so that my speeches may not be forgotten. What is written in ink usually fades with the long passage of time and so when we want some writing to be preserved for a long time, we not only record it in writing, but by some impression on skin, on metal, or in stone. Since what he hoped for was not in the immediate future, but is reserved for fulfillment at the end of time, he then says, “Who would grant me that my words be engraved in a book with an iron stylus,” like an impression made on skin, “or,” if this is not enough, by a stronger impression made, “on a plate of lead, or,” if this seems not enough “securely sculptured,” with an iron stylus, “on flint?”

Then, after he has excluded the cures, he adds the adversities, beginning with the exterior goods which he lost. He places first among these the loss of honor and glory when he says, “He stripped me of my glory,” because although he had previously been held in honor and reverence, now even those younger in age derided him, as the text says further on in Chapter Thirty (v.1). He places second the loss of rank when he says, “and he took the crown from my head,” because before he used to sit “like a king surrounded by his army,” (29:25) as a text will say further on but now “he sat in a dung heap scraping the corrupted matter with a potsherd.” (2:8) He places third the loss of exterior things when he says, “He destroyed me on all sides,” namely, when all my exterior goods are laid waste, “and I perish,” while the adversity lasts, because there is no hope of recovery. So he then places, “and he has taken away my hope like an uprooted tree” for a tree has hope if its branches are cut off that it may grow again as long as its roots stay in the earth. But if its roots are torn out of the earth it must dry out and perish. The same is true of him, as though his roots had been torn out, he had no hope of recovering temporal prosperity.

The root of hope is twofold: one is on the part of divine aid, the other on the part of human aid. The root of the hope which comes from divine aid seemed to have been torn up by the fact that God seemed gravely angry with him according to the opinion of those who put divine punishment only in the adversities of this life, and so he says, “His fury has been roused against me,” which he says to show the vehemence of the anger. For fury is his anger enkindled. But the more violent is the fury the more quickly it usually passes away, and so in this way hope can remain in the future for the one who is angry. But if anger passes into hatred, then no hope seems to remain any longer, and to show this he puts here, “and so he has considered me his enemy.” For one does not hope for a cure from an enemy. He puts the sign of God’s anger and hatred next when he continues, “His hired robbers came all at once.” The term “hired robbers” means the Sabeans (1:15), the Chaldeans (1:17) and the demons (c.1) who together laid waste his goods almost like a conspiracy. He terms them “robbers hired by God” as though this happened from divine ordination, as even the friends of Job had said. These aforementioned hired robbers despoiled Job publicly and without any respect or fear, and so he then puts, “and they have cut a path for themselves through me,” as if to say: They despoiled me like an enemy whom one finds on the road. They have also attacked him everywhere tenaciously. Regarding this he says then, “They besieged,” tenaciously, “all around,” in everything totally, “my tent,” the goods of my house.

Next he shows that the root of his hope which is from human aid has been torn out. He shows that he could not expect any aid from those from whom it seemed most likely to come. He enumerates first those who have been separated from the habitation of his house, beginning with his brothers saying, "He has put my brothers far from me," so that they do not want or are not able to bring me help. Then he places intimate friends next, "and my acquaintances turned from me like strangers," not bringing help to me. As to his blood relatives or who depend on him in any way he says, "My relatives abandoned me," not bringing me any aid. As for those, however, with whom he had been associated once he says, "and those who knew me," that is, once as an intimate friend, now in trial, "have forgotten me," namely, do not care for me. After these he goes on to enumerate the household servants when he says, "The tenants of my house," who used to serve me, "and maids considered me as a stranger," not caring about my afflictions; "and I have been like a foreigner in their eyes," for they obviously despise me. He places next the disobedience of the slaves, "I called my slave and they did not answer me." He adds proud contempt, "I begged him with my mouth," i.e., for I had to urge him not by command, but by entreaties because he despised me. Then he enumerates the persons most closely joined to him, namely his wife and children. A wife usually especially enjoy the presence of her husband, unless she perhaps comes to detest him because of some serious corruption. He shows this saying, "my wife shuddered at my breath," because of the stench of the sores which made him dreadful to her. The duty of children is to obey the least nod expressing the will of a parent. As a result of great contempt for the parent, a father, to whom a son should show respect, has to beg his son humbly and to show this he puts, "I begged the sons of my loins." But this seems to contradict what has been said above (1:19) when the text states that his sons and daughters were crushed by the ruin of their house. The explanation may be that some small ones survived, who were not present at that banquet, or that perhaps some sons of his sons, imputed the death of their own parents their own sins, despised Job for his.

So, after he said he was despised by those inside and outside his household, he shows next that he has been despised both by the foolish and the wise. But foolish men characteristically despise those whom they see in misery, because they think only earthly goods should be honored, and so he says, "Even the foolish despised me," in their heart, when I was present, "and when I left them, they disparaged me," verbalizing things they were ashamed to say in my presence. Then he also says he is despised by wise men whom he once regarded as intimate friends, and so he says, "Once my counselors, they despised me," namely these men whom I used to admit to my counsel because of their wisdom, "and he whom I loved most is against me." Perhaps he says this because one of those present was more hostile to him.

So after he has describes the adversities, which belong to exterior things, he remarks about the consumption of his own body saying, "My bone clung to my skin, after my flesh was consumed," because his flesh had been so consumed from the gravity of his illness that his skin clung to his bones. But because the lips are fleshly and adhere to the teeth like bones, he then makes a exception of them saying, "Only my lips stand around my teeth," by which he makes oblique reference to the fact that all the other functions of the members of the body have ceased and only his function of speech had remained.

After he has enumerated his own adversities, he invites them to compassion, doubling his request for mercy because of the great number of his miseries saying, "Have pity on me, have pity on me, you, at least, who are my friends," because I have been abandoned by others. The cause of pity is his affliction which is all the more grave as it is incited by someone more powerful, and so he continues, "because the hand of the Lord has struck me." For he understood that he had been smitten by God. It does not seem fitting for a man to add affliction to someone who has been afflicted, and so he says, "Why do you persecute me like God?" as if to say: The persecution which comes from God is enough for me, but it was more your duty to bring consolation. He shows in what way they were persecuting him saying, "And glut yourselves on my flesh," which characteristically belongs to detractors, who are said to feed on human flesh insofar as they rejoice in the weaknesses of others. For the flesh is the weakest part of an animal.

The Second Lesson: Job's Great Profession of Faith: His Redeemer Lives

23 Who would grant me that my words be written down? 24 Who would grant me that my words be engraved in a book with an iron stylus or on a plate of lead or securely sculptured on flint. 25 For I know that my Redeemer lives, and I shall arise on the very last day from the earth. 26 I will be surrounded again with my own skin and in my flesh I shall see God, 27 whom I myself will see and my eyes will behold him and not another. This my hope has been put in my heart. 28 Why, then, do you now say: Let us persecute him and let us find the root of the word against him? 29 Flee, then, from the face of the sword, for his sword is the avenger of evils and know there is a judgment.