

JOB'S SOLUTION

December 25, 2021

After the first three chapters of the Book of Job set up the problem of apparently innocent souls suffering, in the next 34 chapters there emerged in a discussion between Job and four of his friends three solutions: Eliphaz, Baldad and Sophir said that suffering is always a punishment, Elihu said that it can also be a warning, Job himself said that it is an impenetrable mystery. But in the course of the discussion he had called in question more than once his Maker, by Whom his faith knew that the suffering had come upon him. And so while Job's patience was admirable – “the Lord has given, the Lord has taken away, blessed be the Lord” (I, 21)– nevertheless it was not perfect. Job has given Almighty God questions to answer.

Here they are: why does God give life to souls longing bitterly for death (III, 20–21)? Why does He single out Job to maltreat him (X, 2–3)? Why does He hide His face from Job and treat him like an enemy (XIII, 23–24)? Why do those who know Him never see His days (XXIV, 1–2)? And finally, “Oh, that I had someone to hear me! (Here is my signature! Let the Almighty answer me (XXXI, 35)!) Job is a man “blameless and upright” (I, 1), but in his extreme suffering he is not above calling the Almighty to account. Job is clearly no plaster Saint, but a man of flesh and blood, with human reactions.

However, Almighty God does know Job's virtue, and that it was only Job's virtue that caused him to be so put to the trial by Satan, and so although He answers to nobody and need not give an answer to Job, nevertheless He will do so (XXXVIII-XLI), as soon as Job and his four friends have all had their say. Now God's answer is not the answer that either Job or we ourselves might have expected, because the Lord God does not address any of Job's questions directly. Instead He appeals to His own immeasurable majesty, infinitely above all merely human calculation, in some of the pages sublimest in all Scripture

for His self-revelation, and which we would do well to keep by our side, until God's own Chastisement puts an end to the Covid nonsense and to all the suffering that it will unleash.

“Alright, Job. You have questioned me. Now let me question you (XXXVIII, 2)! Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Have you ever commanded the morning, or appointed the dawn? Do you tie the constellations together, or loosen the bonds of Orion? Do you even know the laws of the heavens? Do you give to the horse his strength? Is it at your orders that the eagle soars aloft? Can your arm match the arm of God, or can your voice thunder like His? If nobody dares provoke the crocodile, who do you think would dare take on Me? . . .

Under the hail of such questions and many more like them, Job has the wisdom to give way (XL, 3–5): “I am a nobody, what can I say? I have no more to say.” But he has been answered – God is infinitely above merely human thoughts – His thoughts are not ours, and our ways are not His (Is. LV, 8, 9). The questions of Job may not have been answered directly, but the thirst of Job for some answers has been drowned in the inscrutable majesty of God. And God goes on to warn Job against pride, as exemplified in two of God's proudest creatures among His animals, the hippopotamus, Behemoth (XL, 15–24), and the crocodile, Leviathan (XLI). Job is humbled, and admits that his questions were out of place – “. . . I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know . . . therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes” (LII, 2–5).

As a conclusion to all Job's sufferings, God blames Job's four friends for their ignorance and harshness towards Job, but to Job himself He gives back his family and prosperity and much more than before (XLII, 7–17). Blessed are those souls which will never question God's purposes or plans through all the chaos and hurt to be let loose by the Covid nonsense over the next several years. We may not know what we are doing, but God has known since eternity what He is doing – getting us to

Heaven!

Kyrie eleison.