

Devotion on The Book of Job (Chapter Forty-One) for Thursday after the Second Sunday in Lent - 28 February 2013, Anno Domini



The Second Sunday in Lent.

The Collect.

ALMIGHTY God, who seest that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves; Keep us both outwardly in our bodies, and inwardly in our souls; that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The first day of Lent, commonly called Ash Wednesday.

The Collect.

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, who hatest nothing that thou hast made, and dost forgive the sins of all those who are penitent; Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

¶ This Collect is to be said every day in Lent, after the Collect appointed for the day, until Palm Sunday.

1 Canst thou draw out leviathan with an hook? or his tongue with a cord which thou lettest down? 2 Canst thou put an hook into his nose? or bore his jaw through with a thorn? 3 Will he make many supplications unto thee? will he speak soft words unto thee? 4 Will he make a covenant with thee? wilt thou take him for a servant for ever? 5 Wilt thou play with him as with a bird? or wilt thou bind him for thy maidens? 6 Shall the companions make a banquet of him? shall they part him among the merchants? 7 Canst thou fill his skin with barbed irons? or his head with fish spears? 8 Lay thine hand upon him, remember the battle, do no more. 9 Behold, the hope of him is in vain: shall not one be cast down even at the sight of him? 10 None is so

fierce that dare stir him up: who then is able to stand before me? 11 Who hath prevented me, that I should repay him? whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine. 12 I will not conceal his parts, nor his power, nor his comely proportion. 13 Who can discover the face of his garment? or who can come to him with his double bridle? 14 Who can open the doors of his face? his teeth are terrible round about. 15 His scales are his pride, shut up together as with a close seal. 16 One is so near to another, that no air can come between them. 17 They are joined one to another, they stick together, that they cannot be sundered. 18 By his neesings a light doth shine, and his eyes are like the eyelids of the morning. 19 Out of his mouth go burning lamps, and sparks of fire leap out. 20 Out of his nostrils goeth smoke, as out of a seething pot or caldron. 21 His breath kindleth coals, and a flame goeth out of his mouth. 22 In his neck remaineth strength, and sorrow is turned into joy before him. 23 The flakes of his flesh are joined together: they are firm in themselves; they cannot be moved. 24 His heart is as firm as a stone; yea, as hard as a piece of the nether millstone. 25 When he raiseth up himself, the mighty are afraid: by reason of breakings they purify themselves. 26 The sword of him that layeth at him cannot hold: the spear, the dart, nor the habergeon. 27 He esteemeth iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood. 28 The arrow cannot make him flee: slingstones are turned with him into stubble. 29 Darts are counted as stubble: he laugheth at the shaking of a spear. 30 Sharp stones are under him: he spreadeth sharp pointed things upon the mire. 31 He maketh the deep to boil like a pot: he maketh the sea like a pot of ointment. 32 He maketh a path to shine after him; one would think the deep to be hoary. 33 Upon earth there is not his like, who is made without fear. 34 He beholdeth all high things: he is a king over all the children of pride. (Job 41:1-34)

The creature described in today's chapter is steeped in mystery. No commentator I have read has been able to define, precisely, what Leviathan is. I would hope to find some commonality between this beast and some other whose description and characteristics matched perfectly with the creature described, but I have searched in vain. I will confess, at the outset, that my comments are purely conjectural as to the exact identity of the creature, but the picturesque descriptions of its power and threat to man are food enough to feed us fully in this chapter. I will also note that it is unusual to have a full chapter devoted to such a description that, for us today, is unfathomable. The overriding consideration in this chapter is this: There are spiritual, as well as physical, monsters that man cannot contest. Only God can defeat Satan, and only God can defeat such a creature as Leviathan. Are the two related? We cannot be certain, but we will attempt to speculate, biblically, on this creature and the meaning God is conveying in describing it.

First of all, we find that this beast is physically unapproachable by man. 1 Canst thou draw out leviathan with an hook? or his tongue with a cord which thou lettest down? 2 Canst thou put an hook into his nose? or bore his jaw through with a thorn? 3 Will he make many supplications unto thee? will he speak soft words unto thee? 4 Will he make a covenant with thee? wilt thou take him for a servant for ever? 5 Wilt thou play with him as with a bird? or wilt thou bind him for thy maidens? 6 Shall the companions make a banquet of him? shall they part him among the merchants? 7 Canst thou fill his skin with barbed irons? or his head with fish spears?

Whatever the creature is, it cannot be subjugated by man. Various commentators describe this creature as a whale, a crocodile, or a dinosaur. But the descriptions do not suitably match, *in toto*, any of these. Could it be that God is relating the descriptions of several beasts and relegating them to one nature of threat to man? I do not believe so though many better Bible scholars than I am have so concluded. The great paradox to

me is the fact that there are no physical creatures, either then or now, that cannot be subjugated by man.

Secondly, the beasts described has an indomitable and unyielding spirit towards man – only God Himself can subdue Leviathan. It may be that God is telling us that the most powerful creatures in all of Creation are still creatures of His own making and subject only to Him. A reference is made to God's handling of Leviathan is found in Isaiah: *In that day the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea* (Isaiah 27:1)

Please think deeply with me about this terrible monster. He is invincible and invulnerable to every weapon devised against him by man. Moreover, he is a 'piercing' serpent. His dwelling place is in the sea. *19 Out of his mouth go burning lamps, and sparks of fire leap out. 20 Out of his nostrils goeth smoke, as out of a seething pot or caldron. 21 His breath kindleth coals, and a flame goeth out of his mouth.* He is a serpent that literally breathes fire. Do we have such physical dragons? This monster can even present a handsome appearance: *12 I will not conceal his parts, nor his power, nor his comely (handsome) proportion.* His heart is hard as stone: *24 His heart is as firm as a stone; yea, as hard as a piece of the nether millstone.* He is lifted up with pride: *34 He beholdeth all high things: he is a king over all the children of pride.* What animal of our knowledge does this describe? It is not a crocodile or a whale; an elephant or a rhinoceros.....what kind IS it? He is able to cause the sea to boil at his thrashing. He leaves a path of luminosity (false light) in his wake.

Allow me simply to suggest some parallels with Satan though I am not sure that this dragon refers to that same Red Dragon of Revelations. *And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.* (Rev 12:3) Only God can master this creature of His: *And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth* (Rev 12:9) His abode is the sea which he causes to boil with heat. *And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God* (Rev 15:2) Is Satan not lifted up with pride, and was not this the cause of his fall? *For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.* (Isaiah 14:13-15)

What is our defense against the great Red Dragon? Only God! Christ conquered Satan when He died upon the cross for our sins, and rose on the third day.

I do not presume to know what this creature described in Job 41 truly is other than to say that it is a monster that only God can conquer. If it is a crocodile, it does not fully fit the description. It may not be the devil, but he certainly comes nearer the description than any others. This fire-breathing serpent certainly sounds like the being described in Ephesians 6:16 - *Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation.*

Enough speculation! Aristotle said, and for once he was correct, "the whole is greater than the sum of all of the parts ." God is greater than His Creation. He is greater

than Job, and He is greater than you and me. He is able to subdue the monsters of our nightmares as well as those of our awakening hour. Boasting is for fools and devils – depend upon God alone and He will gain the victory.

Tomorrow, we will conclude our study in Job. Job has given evidence of groundless pride in these many chapters of his book. Pride, even in an otherwise good man, is a stain to the soul. It is a sin of the devil. It is something that God literally hates in us even if we are His elect. *16 These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: 17 A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood* (beware abortionists), *18 An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, 19 A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.* (Prov 6:16-19) When God looks at His chosen Child, He would far prefer to see the humility of Christ rather than the pride of Satan.

God has taken Job in hand to open his eyes to his false pride and false righteousness. He has embarrassed a man He loves in order that He might be well. He does the same to you and me, friend. Be quick to AGREE with God in all things and never presume to discredit any of His righteous features.