Study Notes for the Sunday Mass Published by Christians for Christ Ministries. We are a non-denominational Christian ministry that seeks to encourage and facilitate Christians in studying the Holy Scriptures. **"For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus."** 1 Timothy 2:5

Study Notes for the Sunday Mass November 10 2013 – 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time



How can believers cope with difficult events in their lives? Sometimes a helpful insight from the Bible has presented itself with sudden clarity. This was the case recently while I was reading from the Book of Job (pronounced "jobe"), Chapter 19.

This Book was written about a man that God allowed to be afflicted by Satan. It is one of the earliest Books in the Old Testament with most scholars agreeing that the events in the book date to the era of the Patriarchs. This battle between God's man, Job, and the enemy of God, Satan, happened outside of Job's knowledge or understanding. Through it all Job lost his ten children, most of his possessions, and then finally his health. Though Job was the victim of Satan's attack, in the end God restored many of the things that Job had lost. However, through it all Job held steadfastly to his faith in God and the belief that there was abundant life beyond this physical world.

In this section of Chapter 19, Job had just finished a long lament about all of the bad things that God had allowed to occur in his life. "My breath is offensive to my wife, and I am loathsome to my own

brothers. Even young children despise me; I rise up and they speak against me. All my associates abhor me, And those I love have turned against me" (Job 19:17-19 NASB). Next, read the particular section of that chapter about which I said almost jumped off the page at me.

> *Oh that my words were written! Oh that they were inscribed in a book! 24 That with an iron stylus and lead they were engraved in the rock forever! 25 And as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, And at the last He will take His stand on the earth. 26 Even after my skin is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall see God; 27 Whom I myself shall behold, And whom my eyes shall see and not another. My heart faints within me. (Job 19:23-27 NASB)*

The key point of this section was that Job's hope of physical resurrection provided comfort for him throughout the affliction that occurred during his physical life. Somehow Job will stand in his flesh after it's destroyed and see his Redeemer with his own eyes! Job's hope wasn't for some sort of ethereal, heavenly body with which he would move about the clouds. His belief was that he would one day stand face to face and meet God while in a new physical body. His new body would be purified in such a way that he could stand before a Holy God. It's no wonder Job said, "My heart faints within me." How ironic it was that Job hoped his words would be written in a book, the very book from which we just read!

Job wasn't the only Old Testament believer who believed in a physical resurrection, though the stories don't quite leap off the page as the former one. Godly King David, who as a result of being judged for his sin of adultery with Bathsheba endured the passing of his infant son. Nathan the Prophet brought David the bad news. "Then David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the LORD.' And Nathan said to David, 'The LORD also has taken away your sin; you shall not die. However, because by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born to you shall surely die'" (2 Samuel 12:13-14). After his son died, David said, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who knows, the LORD may be gracious to me, that the child may live.' But now he has died; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me" (vv. 22-23). David expressed belief that he would see his son again, in the next life, but his son would not be with him in this life.

The Prophet Daniel also taught about the resurrection of believers to life. In Chapter 12, he opened with a warning about the coming tribulation period that would overcome the earth about which we spoke last week. Next, he provided hope to believers (and terror to unbelievers) about the resurrection of the dead.

> *1 Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. 2 "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to*

> *everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt. (Daniel 12:1-2 NASB)*

Daniel's message provided hope to those in his immediate audience, those taken captive to Babylon during their deportation in 605 BC. As we turn to the Gospel reading for today, let's discover how God's teaching about the resurrection helps to provide us with hope during our times of tribulation. As you study the Gospel lesson for today see if, as happened to me while I read the Book of Job, anything jumps off the page at you.

> *27 Now there came to Him some of the Sadducees (who say that there is no resurrection), 28 and they questioned Him, saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that IF A MAN'S BROTHER DIES, having a wife, AND HE IS CHILDLESS, HIS BROTHER SHOULD TAKE THE WIFE AND RAISE UP OFFSPRING TO HIS BROTHER. 29 "Now there were seven brothers; and the first took a wife, and died childless; 30 and the second 31 and the third took her; and in the same way all seven died, leaving no children. 32 "Finally the woman died also. 33 "In the resurrection therefore, which one's wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife." 34 And Jesus said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, 35 but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage; 36 for neither can they die anymore, for they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. 37 "But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the burning bush, where he calls the Lord THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB. 38 "Now He is not the God of the dead, but of the living; for all live to Him." (Luke 20:27-38 NASB)*

Let me provide some historical background to help you to understand Luke's message. First, although the concept may seem strange to us today, the Sadducees argument related to the Jewish legal concept known as Levirate Marriage found in Deuteronomy 25:5. "When brothers live together and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the deceased shall not be married outside the family to a strange man. Her husband's brother shall go in to her and take her to himself as wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her." The usefulness of Levirate Marriage in that society was something that we saw wonderfully displayed in the life of Ruth found in the Old Testament Book of the same name. Boaz, said, "Moreover, I have acquired Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, to be my wife in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance, so that the name of the deceased will not be cut off from his brothers or from the court of his birth place; you are witnesses today" (Ru 4:10). Levirate Marriage provided an important means of insuring the continuance of a family line. Ruth's marriage to Boaz was ***extremely*** important to God because it was through Ruth that Jesus was born! "Salmon was the father of Boaz by Rahab, Boaz was the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse" (Mt 1:5).

Second, The Sadducees were an interesting bunch of legalistic Jewish believers who held the majority power in the religious court authority called the Sanhedrin in First Century Israel. They

held different beliefs than the other group called the Pharisees. The Sadducees didn't believe in the afterlife, and only held the first five Books of the Bible to be authoritative. This last thing led them to hold some unusual beliefs since they didn't have the benefit of the vast array of historical or prophetic Books in the Old Testament Bible through which to properly interpret the Jewish Law. With this background in mind let's take a deeper look at the Gospel text.

The Sadducees approached Jesus with false motives. They were not truly seeking truth from Jesus, but instead were trying to stump him. They wanted to trip Him up in this theological chess game. Looking back to the previous section Luke said about the scribes and Pharisees, "So they watched Him, and sent spies who pretended to be righteous, in order that they might catch Him in some statement, so that they could deliver Him to the rule and the authority of the governor" (Luke 20:20). This previous verse was directed at the other group known as the Pharisees, ones who *did* believe in the resurrection. In the Gospel text today Jesus addressed the particular beliefs of the other group, the Sadducees. Jesus, seeing the Sadducees motives and the faultiness of their presuppositions, treated them with dignity and grace. Yet they set up an impossible scenario for Jesus to answer based upon their belief system. Jesus explained where they were off base in their reasoning, and His points were as follows.

- Marriage is a valid paradigm for this age but not in the one to come.
- In order to receive eternal life, one must be considered worthy. How does one become worthy of life after death? He states they must be "sons of God" (v.36). How does one become a son on God? Jesus said in the Gospel of John, Chapter 20:31-32, "Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this Book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:30-31). Also, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12-13). Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me will live even if he dies" (John 11:25).
- We will not experience death in the life to come. There we will be like angels in that we no longer will have the capacity to die. We will be eternal and in that regard will be like God. "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is" (1John 3:2).
- Sons of God are the sons of the resurrection. God's resurrection life lives in us, making us like Him. The Apostle Peter said, "For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust" (2 Peter 1:4).
- Jesus pointed to the Old Testament Pentateuch, which was the only piece of the Bible in which the Sadducees believed, to prove His point about the resurrection. Jesus said that since Moses

> used the present tense in describing the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, this proved from the Sadducees own Holy Scriptures that there is life after death on earth. Checkmate, game over!

The main point of this passage was Jesus' teaching of the truth of the resurrection, which is the central hope for Christian believers. Jesus taught His disciples that he would be resurrected, and later all of His believers have the hope that they too will one day rise from the dead with an eternal, perfect body. The Apostle Paul taught a great deal about the importance of the resurrection of Jesus. Let's take time to read what he said.

> *But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied. (1 Corinthians 15:13-19)*

Even though the Sadducees only believed that they would go around once in life, they believed in the biblical truths from the Old Testament Pentateuch. Jesus showed them that they were responsible for their actions in this life. Jesus graciously taught them through their own Scriptures that their eternal destiny was a direct result of their choices made during their lives. They were responsible for paying careful attention to the walk with God. Jesus said, "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). Believers are transformed through the resurrection into a "world" that is also transformed, a place where sin no longer exists and God will walk among us. Like Job, we can look forward to eternal life with God through the promises made by Jesus that "we are saved by grace through faith and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, so that no one may boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Now let's look at the second reading from Second Thessalonians Chapter 2.

> *16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, 17 comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word. 1 Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you; 2 and that we may be delivered from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith. 3 But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. 4 And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will continue to do what we command. 5 And may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ. (2 Thessalonians 2:16 – 3:5)*

In this we see that Paul experienced suffering and prayed for the Thessalonian believers to be comforted in their affliction. I t is important to note that a biblical perspective never assumes that Christians will not suffer. The difference is that we have hope beyond this world, as Paul says, "eternal comfort" (v.16). It is God's love that provides comfort, hope and strength to keep walking in the good works that He has prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10). Instead of being sidetracked by suffering and opposition, Paul asked his fellow believers to pray for them that God would cause His Word to spread and be honored among the people who have not yet heard. Paul recognized the reality of suffering, but did not see the situation as hopeless. He turned to God for help and hope.

The question for us to consider is, "What do *we* turn to for help and hope? Some turn to alcohol to deaden the pain, or prescription drugs. Others to turn people like their spouse, children, or parents. While not all of these sources are bad they are all finite. God is the only One big enough to take care of us. May we learn to turn to God for help and hope. And may we learn to share or need for prayer with others like Paul did so that we are not alone.

Bottom Line: Questions for Reflection

1. What is the importance of the resurrection for you? What difference does knowing the truth of the resurrection make in your day to day life as a Christian?

2. Describe the importance of sharing your faith with nonbelievers. How does the promise of God to give you a new eternally perfect body free from pain and one in which you will be free from sin and able to stand with God in your flesh – just as Job described, motivate you to share with others this good news?

3. Job endured some very difficult trials during his life which led him to question his beliefs but yet he held firm to his hope in the resurrection. We may ask, "If God is good, why do bad things happen, even if we are believers in Jesus Christ?" Perhaps you haven't given much thought to developing a theology of suffering. What are some key points that you have learned from your study today regarding how God uses suffering to accomplish His purposes in your life?

For Further Study

Mike was one of the fastest runners on his track team until he was injured during a terrible motorcycle accident. Hear how he found hope through this time of tribulation through God's Word and his identification with the Book of Job (25 minutes, Words to Live By radio program, RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, Michigan): http://www.christiansforchrist.org/96a

Listen to Os Guinness's video message about, "If God is God then why do bad things happen?" (24 minutes, Day of Discovery TV program, RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, Michigan):

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http://www.christiansforchrist.org/96x

Readings for the Week

Note: For a listing of readings for the Roman Catholic Mass visit this web site: http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/111013.cfm Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading

2 MC 7:1-2, 9-14

Second Reading

2 Thessalonians 2:16 – 3:5 NASB 16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, 17 comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word. 1 Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you; 2 and that we may be delivered from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith. 3 But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. 4 And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will continue to do what we command. 5 And may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ.

Gospel Reading

Luke 20:27-38 NASB 27 Now there came to Him some of the Sadducees (who say that there is no resurrection), 28 and they questioned Him, saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that IF A MAN'S BROTHER DIES, having a wife, AND HE IS CHILDLESS, HIS BROTHER SHOULD TAKE THE WIFE AND RAISE UP OFFSPRING TO HIS BROTHER. 29 "Now there were seven brothers; and the first took a wife, and died childless; 30 and the second 31 and the third took her; and in the same way all seven died, leaving no children. 32 "Finally the woman died also. 33 "In the resurrection therefore, which one's wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife." 34 And Jesus said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, 35 but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage; 36 for neither can they die anymore, for they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. 37 "But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the burning bush, where he calls the Lord THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB. 38 "Now He is not the God of the dead, but of the living; for all live to Him."

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Online Scripture verses for most Bible versions can be found at: http://www.biblegateway.com/

Scripture quotations taken from the NASB