

# Job 25-26

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[ 0 : 00 ] It was from a jail chaplain that I heard it said concerning the incarcerated of our own day, Dave, you'll be hard-pressed to find a man behind bars who feels he belongs there.

Here, among those declared guilty, some presume themselves to be innocent.

And in our own day, we've seen in our judicial system that that indeed is the case. Some who believe that if their situation were properly understood at the bar, the judicial arm of power that levied punishment would be lifted, set aside, that having been declared guilty, one would be acquitted, freed.

Dave, you'll be hard-pressed to find a man behind bars who feels he belongs there. Job appears to be just such a man.

By all appearances, the divine, powerful arm of justice has been levied against him and his family and all that he has.

[ 1 : 34 ] A convict, incarcerated, yet a man looking for his day in court. If we've seen anything of Job, we see one who continually asserts that if he could just get it, that is his day in court, God would acquit him of all wrong.

If I could just get in front of him, all this would be dismissed. Take a look at chapter 23 of Job, where he's speaking.

Verse 3, Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that meaning God, that I might come even to his seat, literally, in a sense, the bar of his judgment in court.

I would lay my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments. I would know what he would answer me and understand what he would say to me. Would he contend with me in the greatness of his power?

No, he would pay attention to me. There, an upright man could argue with him, and I would be acquitted forever by my judge.

[ 2 : 52 ] Interesting vantage point of Job. Convinced of his innocence before God. To this man, Bildad speaks one final time.

Chapter 25. And in this speech, we find Bildad using words in the dress of conventional wisdom.

With Hebraic synonymous parallels, he leaves one overarching impression for Job.

That God, who dwells in the highest of heavens, is ruler over all. That God sees all.

That God seeks out all. That he has the right to rule. And all fear should fall. On account of him.

[ 3 : 57 ] He has limitless armies that stand by for war. He can disclose the place in the heart of everyone. Therefore, paraphrasing, Bildad, Job, put down your belief that you can get the better of God.

Take a look. Verse 2. Bildad says, Dominion and fear are with God. He makes peace, and notice where it comes from, in his high heaven. Is there any number to his armies?

Upon whom does his light not arise? How then can man be in the right before God? How can he who was born of a woman be pure? Behold, even the moon is not bright, and the stars are not pure in his eyes.

How much less man who is a maggot, and the son of man who is a worm. In other words, Job, be careful what you ask for.

Rule and fear come from the highest heaven. Armies beyond count. Light which penetrates the deepest recesses of the human heart. There's no chance of being declared righteous by God.

[ 5 : 12 ] Notice how he moves from the heights of heaven to the formulation of light all the way down then upon man, and ironically, oh how ironic it is, the question of verse 4a, which becomes in distilled form, the question the entire Bible takes its time to answer.

How then can man be in the right or justified before God? For Bildad, the answer is, he cannot.

And Job, if you were to have your day in court, you would not. You can see the way the first stanza, or the final stanza of Bildad, closes with the word, behold, this idea of, I'm summarizing now, Job.

Behold, even the moon is not bright and the stars are not pure in his eyes, how much less man who is a maggot and the son of man who is a worm.

What a penetrating, forceful argument by Bildad. I think of the light penetrating that he calls upon here.

[ 6 : 42 ] Upon whom does his light not arise? It's almost as if he says, hey, Job, have you seen the Lord of the Rings on screen yet with the ever-seen eye coming forth from Mordor?

Well, I'm explaining to you, Job, that on the highest of mountains, in the heights of the heaven, is the eternal gaze of the Father and no one can be made righteous in his sight.

Such is Bildad's speech. And in one sense, he has said nothing here that is wrong. In fact, as we've seen these friends so often in the letter, the book of Job, almost everything they say is correct and right and actually verified by the New Testament use of it.

They speak true things. They speak true things about God, but not true things about God in this case. This final phrase, and the son of man who is a worm.

When Winston Churchill was a young man at the age of 32, he found himself at a dinner table seated next to Violet Asquith, daughter of H.H. Asquith, who had been Prime Minister of England from 1908 to 1916.

[ 8 : 14 ] Churchill's 32, she's 19, still both young in some sense. And in the course of conversation, she would later recall one of the great famous lines of Churchill when he said to her, Lady Asquith, We are all worms, but I do believe that I am a glow worm.

Well, Bildad has put all of humanity as a worm. A quick aside on the phrase there, the son of man.

It's an interesting phrase. I think I spoke this week with one of our Hebrew scholars in the Oriental Institute to see if there was any significance here to what Jesus will later call himself as the son of man.

But his response, Drayton Benner, came with great clarity when he told me that Job 25.6 looks like a perfect example of synonymous periphrasis.

Ben Adam, or literally son of man, just means human. In other words, it's a play or a different way of speaking of the first half of the verse.

[ 9 : 30 ] It's common in the Old Testament, he went on. Ben plus the noun is a common way of expressing an instance of the category defined by the noun. So, indeed, in this sense, the son of man simply means a human being.

Later, it will have great significance when Jesus uses it in connection with Daniel's usage and the son of man who comes. But there it is.

Bildad, with great clarity, expressing to Job his need to lay down his case before God. The point has been made.

The lunacy of thinking that you would be just in the sight of God in arguing your own case, he has put to rest. Well, not so, according to Job.

Bildad's speech is followed by Job's response and Job's response is severe. Some of the most severe language in the book.

[ 10 : 42 ] He paints a different picture. If chapter 25 gives you a picture of Bildad as a learned, logically oriented instructor who, through Socratic discourse with his questions of how then and how can, almost leading him to the conclusion that Job should rest his case, the same kind of language Bildad used in chapter 8 and in chapter 21, if he's the instructor, what you find in Job here is an insubordinate pupil who is completely convinced that he has surpassed his tutor in every respect in ways of wisdom and knowledge.

I want you to listen for the sarcastic tonal quality of the opening salvo verses 1 to 4. Then Job answered and said, How you have helped him who has no power!

How you have saved the arm that has no strength! How you have counseled him who has no wisdom and plentifully declared sound knowledge!

With whose help have you uttered words and whose breath has come out from you? I mean, it is dripping with sarcasm. Thanks a lot, Bildad!

Boy, you've told me things I never knew! Of course, all the while getting ready to say that Bildad himself hasn't even touched the fringes of the truth that he has declared.

[ 12 : 26 ] These are sharp words, cutting words. You think of the term sarcasm or even in the Greek the phrase from sarks or flesh. A sarcastic word is something that actually almost bites you right in the flesh.

It's ripping, it's tearing, it's derisive. Those verses are an elegant, if not disquieting, eruption.

Job is doing the kind of thing Churchill executed on the floor effortlessly and extemporaneously against his verbal sparring partners or his political enemies.

He knew how to take them right out. He had the gift of annihilation and he did it with his tongue. That's what Job has done.

If this were academic gamesmanship, then Job seems to have gotten the better of it, but it's not. From Job's perspective, this is not a classroom discussion on the problem of evil or some misguided providence of God.

[ 13 : 38 ] More is meant by these words for Job than merely to be in a joust. They're meant to be taken, I believe, as a pronouncement of judgment. Correction does not seem to be the goal.

Judgment is. It's a verdict. Job is pronouncing on the one that he's addressed and he's in the wrong. That this one, Bildad, is the one who will have to change his mind.

It's the same technique and goal that Paul uses when he scolds the Corinthians. He's not so much instructing or chiding or jousting, he's declaring them to be in the wrong.

And Job does that hear. From these, we can assume that the vitriolic sarcasm at this kind of level, while it's sparingly used in the Bible, I can only think of a couple of instances like this.

Elijah, of course, with the gods in the days of Ahaz and Jezebel, when they had this sacrifice, and he began to just roll out in mockery upon them.

[ 14 : 53 ] It was not so much a desire to get them to see things his way, but rather a declaration of judgment that they were in the wrong. Paul uses it once or twice, always to declare an act of judgment.

I have not yet determined for myself if Jesus ever uses it. The easy link between Job here and Jesus would simply be to point to places in the New Testament where he gets the best of his opponents.

But I've gone back this week and read those sections, Matthew 23, the end of John 9, other places. And it's more a straightforward declaration for him than it is judgment, a sarcasm.

Well, the preamble of judgment by Job is voiced and then in verses 5 to 13 he puts forward his argument. And I want you to see, not having had a chance this week to look at that text for very long.

But if you were to take a look at it subtly, it mirrors the themes of Bildad's speech. And the trajectory actually follows Bildad but only in reverse order.

[ 16 : 07 ] So just put your eyes on 5 to 13 and begin to recognize that where Bildad began with God in the heavens and descending down through the moon and stars to the clouds and then upon the earth, finally resting with the son of man and man embedded in the very ground itself.

Job will move in the opposite direction. His poetry here begins where Bildad left off, namely in the depths of the earth and with man, the sons of men, dead.

with hell itself, the place of the dead, having no covering outside the sight of God. And from there he begins to rise through the clouds and the moon until, verse 13, he ends up back into the very heavens.

It's as if he has written poetry that answers Bildad at only expansive levels. All that you have said, Bildad, let me say even more. You have said that God is like light that sees all things or that fear comes from heaven.

Well, I am telling you that they are trembling in the depths, those who are dead. You have said that the clouds are covered. Well, I am telling you that he has inscribed a circle on the face of the waters and a boundary between light and darkness.

[ 17 : 42 ] the full face of the moon. God is able to do all of these things. It's fascinating to me the conclusion.

Do you see verse 14? How it mirrors Bildad's conclusion or summary in verse 5? Bildad began with the term behold, bringing all things together now in his argument.

So too, Job, behold, let me say the summation of the matter. These are but the outskirts of his ways. And how small a whisper do we hear of him, but the thunder of his power who can understand.

Don't you love that? The outskirts of his ways, almost in a wooden way. You're only hitting on the fringes of the garment of God. Or how small a whisper do we hear of him.

It's almost as if Job is looking back to Bildad and said, look, even after all I've said, we only have God's inside voice.

[ 18 : 51 ] We haven't even heard the voice he can use outside. Did you ever have a parent tell you that growing up? I'd like you to use your inside voice. That's basically what he's saying.

How small a whisper do we hear of him? I mean, all that we know of God is still limited to the way one would speak here before one erupts outside in the open air.

What a concluding moment. The pillars of heaven tremble. Earth gets its judgments and heaven gets its favor.

And that last line is stunning. But the thunder of his power, who can understand? You need to understand there that the word power was also back in chapter 23 and verse 8 or 6.

The power of God was his power to make judgments against Job. The thunder of his power was a power that actually meted out God's wrath.

[ 20 : 02 ] And who can understand that? Job thought if he got into the presence of God, he could make God understand. How does one get from Job to Jesus?

I can think of one moment in Jesus' life ministry where he seems to play the man in jail who believes earnestly himself to be innocent, sins, even to the point of death.

It's on the cross when Jesus says, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? It seems to be an indication that if I were to be in your presence, certainly I would be declared righteous.

Certainly what is taking place here for me in my sufferings cannot be according to my own sins. God and indeed there we have learned the connection between Job and the gospel.

Job will later make atonement for his friends. Jesus makes atonement for the world. And one of the key centers of gravity in this book that we are learning is that the righteous do suffer.

[ 21 : 27 ] And the power of that, who can understand God and the power of God. He reminds me of Romans 11, 31 to 33, when you speak of the wisdom and the knowledge and the power of God.

Who can understand these things? But he has done something so ironically through the suffering of the righteous one on behalf of the others that indeed the gospel comes forth from it with great strength.

for Job at the end of 26, there's only one conversation partner left to contend with, and that's God himself.

You won't hear in the remainder of the series any more of the speeches of his friends. They recede from the scene. Job stands as the righteous man, waiting to hear from God concerning the nature and the purposes for his suffering.

And he will not be disappointed because as we will see, God will speak. Jesus himself, though, was unlike Job.

[ 22 : 43 ] He didn't speak. When they said to him on the cross, he trusts in God, let God deliver him now, Matthew 27, 43. In other words, you presumed yourself to be righteous and in good standing with God.

Well, if you were righteous and in good standing with God, then God would alleviate the suffering and pain for you. Now, if you trusted in God, well, then God will deliver you, mocking him according to conventional wisdom.

And you found no explosive, sarcastic response from the Lord. but rather the simple words in the same gospel text, forgive them for they know not what they do.

As we come to the Lord's table, we come to the most ironic expression of God's concern for us.

That all of our unrighteousness has been paid for by his righteous sufferings. That all of our ability to stand in his presence justified comes on account of this just act in which sins are paid for by one who takes them to himself for us.

[ 24 : 12 ] And so I invite you to come in a few moments with joy for all that he has done for you. Our Heavenly Father, Bildad's speech, Job's response, severe as it was, and a contribution to our understanding of the gospel.

Help us, O Lord, to worship you for the way in which you have given yourself for us.

In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen.