

A Guide To The Reader

Pastor recommends that to obtain maximum benefit from his comments you read in full from the Bible every reference whenever one appears. Otherwise the reading of the comments is simply a skimming over the surface. They are rather designed to make you stop and meditate and even look up further references as the Holy Spirit guides you. Do pray before you read that the Holy Spirit will be your Tutor and that the time you spend will be time spent with Him.

Job 24-25

24.1. Current affairs are a study in themselves even for the astutest politician or economist. On a global scale no leader of any one country, however powerful, is in control of his own country's political or financial destiny. There are too many unknowns, too many global constraints to be taken into consideration and weighed and there are many of which he is ignorant. However, God knows them all and is fulfilling His purposes. The question is why do those who know Him not have special knowledge, special exemption from trouble even because of the good they could do, in the midst of the years? Even a Daniel in later years after a long and fruitful political life had to declare of some things, "I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?" (Daniel 12.8) Some words, some affairs, some purposes are closed till the time of the end.

24.2. For the rest of the chapter Job in his turn lists some of the things which evil men apparently get away with. His sense is, that by many examples he may disprove what the friends fundamentally held, but surely could demonstrably see was false, that only good things happen to good men and bad things to bad men. What Job is prepared to admit in 24.24. is that they are exalted for a little while; and at the end of chapter 27 he spells this out at greater length. It would be good once again to read Psalm 73 where the psalmist many years later draws the same conclusion, but acknowledges that the apparent success of the wicked had been a snare to his faith.

24.2-4. Even if the requirements of the Lord set out in, for example, Deuteronomy 19.14; 24.6-17; 27.17 had not yet been written down clearly they were understood, even in Edom, as natural justice written on the conscience of fallen mankind. Yet, there were many then, and there are many today, who operate personal as well as syndicated crime. Laws are for the regulation of what is right and the punishment of what is wrong. Now natural justice affirms that where there is a breach of natural and moral law there must be punishment. If it is beyond man then it is God's realm as Judge. So why do they prosper; and why is a person who knows God not publicly vindicated immediately? Why does the one who knows God suffer unfairly?

24.5-6. The wicked, in the midst of all their wickedness, go about their normal daily work as if nothing had happened. What is more they prosper. Even the driest and most unlikely of places yield abundantly for them. They reap abundantly and their vintage is top quality.

24.7-11. Yet they grind the poor. Their employees endure working conditions that are in manifest contrast to their own luxurious lifestyle. "Those who make oil within their walls, and

tread their winepresses” get to drink none of it and thirst even while they work amid such abundance. The wicked rich are cruel.

24.12. But where is God in all this? When men groan, and “the soul of the wounded crieth out” why does God not answer immediately? When put like this, the truth begins to dawn. As we say vulgarly, “give them enough rope and they will hang themselves.” That is, the Lord delays judgment till the wickedness is ripe and judgment may be full and fully warranted. The question is not asked here, though Job is asking it implicitly of himself, what should a believer’s attitude be in the midst of all this? Can he hang on to his faith or will he turn away and become bitter? God will lay folly to the oppressors.

24.13-17. The murderer and the adulterer rebel against the light and ply their trade under cover of darkness. Forced entry is the subject of verse 16 after having taken appropriate observations. The darkness is their sphere; they have no truck with the light of day or the light of honesty. If we did but know, they are terrified that the day will reveal their work and that the judgment day shall declare it (1 Corinthians 3.13). The scripture here declares, what they would never admit, that they are deeply afraid of the vengeance of God and man.

24.18-19. Despite what has been said already, that year after year their harvest and vintage were plentiful, they vanish as swiftly as fast flowing waters and the grave soon puts an end to these good but undeserved times. As rapidly as snow melts and the meltwater runs away so the grave, and the judgment which follows, soon changes the whole landscape of such “success.”

24.20. “The worm shall feed sweetly on him” is a powerful picture of what will happen to his body all unknowing; and a foretaste of what will happen to his soul (Mark 9.43-48). This theme is taken up by the psalmist in 49.14 and, indeed, the whole Psalm should be read at this point.

“Wickedness shall be broken as a tree.” Much later David wrote (Psalm 37.35-36) “I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away.” No tree lasts for ever and death will bring down the hardiest.

24.21-22. The wicked will take easy pickings from the poor and needy such as the widow but will not forbear to take issue with the powerful. After all, it was king David, the most powerful king of his time, who could say “I have seen the wicked in great power.” Maybe he was referring to King Saul; maybe others of his opponents. “No man is sure of life” when powerful opportunistic and greedy men hold sway.

24.23. This is another way of saying that the wicked and powerful man is never content with what he has and is always seeing what he can next annex.

24.24-25. It is but a little while and all their vaunted power is stripped from them. Surely, says Job, this is undeniable, incontrovertible. The theology of the friends is faulty at root.

25.1-2. Bildad’s reply is brief because there is nothing to be added This is what their advice is reduced to, though the friends are unconvinced and still regard him as “righteous in his own

eyes” (32.1). Bildad satisfies himself with the assertion of God’s omnipotence which, of course, Job would not deny.

25.3-6. Bildad’s conclusion on behalf of all the friends is that seeing that God is omnipotent “how then can man be justified with God?” This is of course the biggest question of all. Eliphaz has spoken of it, as has Job himself (4.12-19;9.2). It is the theme of the Bible that Jesus Christ alone justifies and that He achieves justification of His people by the atoning death of the cross, the shedding of His precious blood to pay the ransom of His sinful, elect people. Access to God, the way into His presence is what Job contends for and pleads that surely this is what the blood of atonement, in the sacrifices which prefigure the Saviour, achieves. It is a thing most wonderful that though God is so high, and especially since He is most holy, that a way for guilty sinners has been found. What God has revealed, His people should not be too shy to avail themselves of even though a worm in his own eyes and God so great.

The conclusions which the friends draw from God’s omnipotence and which Job draws are diametrically opposed. The friends argue from His greatness that He is too high and too holy to be concerned with fallen sinners while Job argues that as Creator, and therefore the Creator of natural justice. He must “be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Romans 3.26).