



Job - Chapter Twenty Five

II Job 3:1-42:6 - Dialogue: Job, His Suffering, and His Standing before God (continues)

II.b Job 4:1-25:6 - The Friends and Job: Can Job be Right Before God? (continues/concludes)

II.b.iii Job 22:1-25:6 - The Third Cycle (continues/concludes)

Summary of Chapter Twenty Five

Bildad's words represent the final speech of the three friends. By returning to the central question from Eliphaz's initial response, as recorded in Job 4:17-19, Bildad reveals the dilemma within which the friends have constrained themselves and the posture they have embodied toward God and Job as a result. Since the friends have argued their theological understanding and application as representing God's perspective, they have consistently thought of the choice before them as being that either God or Job must be in the wrong. On account of Job's suffering and their own confidence about being able to interpret it, the friends have never really brought their own viewpoint under scrutiny or given thought to the possibility that they may be wrong in both their defence of God and their pursuit of Job.

II.b.iii.3 Job 25:1-6 - Bildad Speaks: How Can a Mortal Be Righteous Before God?

Refer to the chapter summary above.

¹ Then Bildad the Shuhite answered:

² 'Dominion and fear are with God;
he makes peace in his high heaven.'

- 3 Is there any number to his armies?
Upon whom does his light not arise?

Job 25:1-3

Then Bildad the Shuhite answered. This is the final word from Job's three friends. The shortness of this statement of Bildad (and some textual problems in Job Chapter 24) leads some to wrongly think that the text is simply confused beyond recovery.

Many modern scholars have lengthened this short speech by including Job 26:5-14, which is part of Job's response, but there is no obvious reason why this should be done. The theme is similar but not the same. Yet, while acknowledging some difficulties in the text, it is better to simply see the brevity of this final statement from Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar to reflect the fact that the debate is running out of fuel and starts a transition to a different stage of the book.

Beginning at Chapter 25, the formal structure of the book would dictate two more chapter-long rebuttals, one from Bildad and one from Zophar, to complete the third round of the dialogue. However, this is not what happens. Instead Zophar has no final speech at all and Bildad's speech is cut drastically short. So the formal debate is never finished. In Chapter 26 the dialogue grinds to a halt and from there to the end of Chapter 31 Job holds forth alone in a long and loose-jointed presentation. Finally in this list of textually problems, there is the odd case of Elihu, the brand new character introduced near the end of the book, who delivers what many readers feel to be the most long-winded, boring, and irrelevant discourse of all.

Dominion and fear are with God. In exasperation, Bildad can only repeat what has already been agreed to by Job and all three of his friends; they have already expressed agreement on the greatness of God: <<*He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength – who has resisted him, and succeeded?*>> (Job 9:4), <<*For our shield belongs to the Lord, our king to the Holy One of Israel*>> (Psalm 89:18), and: <<*To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen*>> (Revelation 1:5b-6).

Is there any number to his armies? Bildad also wanted Job to know that God was an impossible foe and that he should simply surrender to this great God who is so mighty in terms of the numbers who serve him, probably a reference to his heavenly host of angels.

Upon whom does his light not arise? Every living creature belongs to God whether they choose to serve him or not: <<*He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the*

good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous>> (Matthew 5:45b NIV).

- 4 How then can a mortal be righteous before God?
How can one born of woman be pure?

Job 25:4

How then can a mortal be righteous before God? This question is repeated several times throughout the dialogue between Job and his friends in slightly different forms: it is asked originally by Eliphaz in Job 4:17, recast and used by Job in his second speech in Job 9:2, repeated and reinforced by Eliphaz in Job 15:14, and returned to again here by Bildad in the final speech of the friends.

How can one born of woman be pure? The purpose of these questions seems to be to cause Job to understand that he is a sinner just like all, making it easier for him to confess and repent.

- 5 If even the moon is not bright
and the stars are not pure in his sight,
6 how much less a mortal, who is a maggot,
and a human being, who is a worm!'

Job 25:5-6

If even the moon is not bright and the stars are not pure in his sight. Bildad considered that even some of the glorious aspects of creation still fall short of the glory of the Creator, something with which Paul concurs: <<*since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*>> (Romans 3:23).

How much less a mortal, who is a maggot and a human being, who is a worm! If the moon and the stars cannot reflect the glory of God as they should, then it stands to reason that man cannot either.