

SOME PERPLEXING OLD TESTAMENT QUESTIONS AND SOME NEW TESTAMENT ANSWERS

22 Then Eliphaz the Temanite responded, ²Can a man be [of any] benefit to God? No, although the man who acts wisely does benefit himself. ³What asset is it to the Almighty if you are innocent, or what gain [does he derive from] your claim that your ways are blameless? ⁴[Then, again,] does he arraign you for your piety, is that why he enters into judgment with you?

⁵Is not your wickedness great? Is there no end to your iniquities? ⁶You demanded security from your brothers for no reason; you stripped men of their clothing, leaving them naked. ⁷You gave no water to the weary, and you withheld food from the hungry, ⁸even though you were a powerful man owning land—an honored man, residing in the land. ⁹You sent widows away empty-handed and you crushed the arms of the fatherless, [rendering them powerless]. ¹⁰That is why you are surrounded by snares, and [the prospect of] sudden peril terrifies you. ¹¹[This is why your] light has become darkness so that you cannot see, and the flood waters are about to cover you. ¹²Is not God in the heights of heaven? And consider the distant stars, how high they are! ¹³So you say, “What does God know? Can he judge through the thick clouds? ¹⁴Thick clouds hide [us from] him so that he cannot see as he walks around on the zenith of the heavens.”

¹⁵Will you keep to the hidden path, the way that evil men have walked, ¹⁶men who were cut off before their time, men whose foundation was swept away by the [raging] river? ¹⁷They said to God, “Leave us alone! What can the Almighty do for us?” ¹⁸Yet it was he who filled their houses with good things! I stand far removed from the thinking of the wicked! ¹⁹Righteous men see [their ruin] and rejoice; the innocent ridicule them, saying, ²⁰“Indeed, their abundance is cut off, the fire has devoured their wealth!”

²¹Submit to God and be at peace [with him]; the benefits you will thereby derive will be good. ²²Accept instruction from his mouth and put his words into your heart. ²³If you return to the Almighty, you will be restored—remove iniquity far from your tent. ²⁴Lay your gold nuggets in the dust, even the fine gold of Ophir, lay them among the rocks in the ravines. ²⁵Then the Almighty will be your gold, [he will be] the choicest silver to you. ²⁶Then you will delight in the Almighty, you will lift up your face to God. ²⁷You will pray to him and he will hear you, and you will pay your vows. ²⁸Then whatever you determine will be accomplished for you, and light will shine on your ways. ²⁹When men are depressed, you will say, “Be lifted up!” and [God] will save the downcast. ³⁰[God] will [even] deliver the guilty, they will be delivered by the cleanness of your hands.

23 Then Job replied, ²This very day my complaint is bitter; the blow I receive is heavier than my groanings.* ³If only I knew where to find him, so that I might come to his throne. ⁴I would present my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments. ⁵I would find out how he would answer me; I would consider what he would say to me. ⁶Would he oppose me with awesome judicial power? No, he would not press charges against me. ⁷There an upright man could present his case before him, and I would be forever acquitted by my Judge.

⁸[But] I go forward and he is not there; [I turn] backward, but I do not perceive him. ⁹When he is at work on the left, I cannot behold him; he turns to the right, [but] I cannot see him. ¹⁰But he knows the way that I take; after he has tested me, I will come

forth like gold. ¹¹My feet have closely followed his steps; I have kept to his way without turning from it. ¹²I have not deviated from the commandment of his lips; [like treasure], I have stored up the words of his mouth in my bosom.

¹³But he stands alone [as God]; who is able to change him? He does whatever he pleases. ¹⁴He will carry out what he has appointed for me, and many such plans he still has in store. ¹⁵This is why I am terrified before him; when I think about all this, I am in dread of him. ¹⁶God has made my heart faint; the Almighty has terrified me, ¹⁷because I was not cut off in the presence of the darkness, nor did he conceal the thick darkness from my face.

24 Since our times are not hidden from the Almighty, why do those who know him never see his days [of judgment]? ²Men move boundary stones; they pasture the flocks they have stolen. ³They drive away the orphan's donkey and take the widow's ox as a pledge. ⁴They push the needy off the pathway and force all the poor of the land into hiding. ⁵Like wild donkeys in the wilderness, the poor go about their labor, searching for food in the desert, food for their children. ⁶They gather fodder in the field and glean the vineyards of the wicked. ⁷Lacking clothing, they spend the night naked; they have nothing with which to cover themselves in the cold. ⁸They are drenched by the mountain rains; lacking [any] shelter, they huddle against the rocks.

⁹There are those who snatch the fatherless child from its mother's breast; they seize the infant of the poor as a pledge. ¹⁰Lacking clothing, the poor go around naked; while they go hungry, they carry the [master's] sheaves. ¹¹They crush olives among the terraces; they tread the winepresses, yet they themselves suffer thirst. ¹²The groans of the dying rise from the city, and the souls of the wounded cry out [for help]. But God charges no one with wrongdoing.

¹³There are those who rebel against the light; they do not know its ways or stay in its paths. ¹⁴The murderer rises at dawn, so that he may kill the poor and the needy. And at night he is a thief. ¹⁵The eyes of the adulterer watches for the dusk; he thinks, "No eyes will see me." He keeps his face concealed. ¹⁶In the dark, men break into houses, but during the daytime they shut themselves in; they want nothing to do with the light. ¹⁷For all of them, the morning is like the shadow of death; but they are friends with the terrors of darkness.

¹⁸[But] they are [like] foam on the surface of the water! Let their portion of the land be cursed; let them not go to the vineyards! ¹⁹As heat and drought snatch away the melting snow, so let Sheol snatch away those who have sinned! ²⁰Let the womb forget them; let the worm feast on them! Let them no longer be remembered! So let wickedness be broken like a tree [shattered by lightning]!

²¹But they prey on the barren and childless woman, and they show no kindness to the widow. ²²Yet God by his power preserves these men who are mighty [in the land]; though they have no assurance of life [in themselves], they are established. ²³He provides them with security, and they are supported; his eyes are on all their ways. ²⁴They are exalted, and then after a little while they are gone; they are laid low and gathered up like all the rest of men. They are cut off like heads of grain. ²⁵If this is not the case, who can refute me and render my speech worthless? (Job 22:1-24:25)

*Chapter 23 verse 2 in the N.I.V. reads, "his hand is heavy in spite of my groaning"

Introduction

Job asks the heart-felt question, *“Since [our] times are not hidden from the Almighty, why do those who know him never see his days [of judgment]?”* (24:1.) Why does the LORD not display His glory by performing mighty acts of deliverance for His people and by bringing judgment upon the wicked?

Isaiah makes a similar lament when he pleads with God to act and so display His glory in a mighty way:

Oh, [Jehovah, I pray] that you would tear open the heavens, that you would come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence—²like fire kindles the brushwood, like fire causes water to boil—[come down] to make your name known to your enemies and cause the nations to quake at your presence! ³When you did awesome things that we did not expect, you came down, and the mountains quaked at your presence. (Isa. 64:1-3)

Isaiah recalls God’s past revelation of His divine glory at Mt. Sinai following the Exodus; and he longs to see God reveal Himself like that again.

When the person and purposes of God are hidden, it causes great agony to the Christian’s soul. Such was the experience of Job as he asks some of the perplexing questions that baffled and dismayed the believers during the Old Testament era.

As we consider the questions raised in this present passage of Old Testament Scripture, let us seek answers to them in the light of New Testament revelation.

I. Why Does God Hide Himself from the Believer?

Eliphaz seems to be arguing that there is no compelling, utilitarian reason why God would feel obligated to enter into communion with a man; there is no benefit that God would derive from such a relationship. He asks, *“Can a man be [of any] benefit to God?”* (22:2.) Man’s finite wisdom is surely not profitable to the God of all wisdom (22:2b.) Man’s righteousness is of no gain to the Almighty (22:3.)

Eliphaz maintains that the interaction God has with Job is strictly judicial in nature; indeed, it is a matter of God, in His capacity as Judge, executing His righteous judgment against Job (22:4-11.) It is obvious that God is not entering into judgment against Job because of Job’s piety: *“Does he arraign (אָרַיִן) you for your piety, [is that why] he enters into judgment with you?”* (22:4.) The reason for the arraignment must be because of Job’s transgressions; indeed, Eliphaz charges that Job’s wickedness is great (22:5.)

In support of his claim, Eliphaz confronts Job with the following unsubstantiated “evidence:” *“you demanded security from your brothers for no reason”* (22:6a)—Job has wrongfully deprived his neighbor of his property; *“you stripped men of their clothing, leaving them naked”* (22:6b)—Job has been ruthless in his dealings with others; *“you gave no water to the weary, and you withheld food from the hungry”* (22:7)—Job has shown neither hospitality nor mercy, even though he had the means available to come to the aid of those in need (22:8); *“you sent widows away empty-handed”* (22:9a)—Job has given them no charity to support themselves and their children; indeed, far from being charitable, Job has cruelly taken advantage of the helpless, he has crushed the arms of the fatherless (22:9b.) According to Eliphaz, this is why such calamities have befallen Job; this is why Job now finds himself engulfed in darkness with the floodwaters overwhelming him (22:10-11.) Eliphaz assumes that Job must be guilty of such offenses and transgressions, else why would God bring His judgment against him? As his earlier rhetorical question implies, God does not arraign a man because of his piety (22:4.) Note: In Job 31:16-23 Job will maintain that the opposite of Eliphaz’s accusations has been true of him.

Eliphaz further charges Job with foolishly, even blasphemously, thinking he can hide his conduct from God (22:12-20.) He reminds Job that God occupies the heights of heaven (22:12a)—from that vantage point He can behold all things, as opposed to being so far away that He does not know what is happening on the earth, as Eliphaz supposes Job to assume, for he charges Job with posing the question, *“What does God know?”* (22:13a.) Eliphaz charges Job with thinking that God cannot see through the thick clouds so as to observe and judge man’s evil deeds done in the dark (22:13b-14.) Entertaining such foolish notions about God, Job is encouraged to keep walking on *“the hidden path, the way that evil men have walked”* (22:15), doing so without repentance.

Eliphaz momentarily digresses in order to solemnly remind Job that such men *“were cut off before their time”* (22:16;) i.e.; as a judgment from God they met with swift and premature death. He proceeds to describe these wicked men as “commanding” God to depart from them because they see no utilitarian benefit to be derived from His fellowship (22:17.) Their insane blasphemy has caused them to view things in an up-side-down fashion: it is God who derives no utilitarian benefit by entering into fellowship with man (22:2-3.) Such wicked men fail to perceive that it is God who has *“filled their houses with good things”* (22:18a;) all the blessings of prosperity that these men enjoy are the result of the goodness and graciousness of the very God whom they spurn. Eliphaz distances himself from the mind of such men, the very mention of their attitude is repulsive to him, so he testifies, *“I stand far removed from the thinking of the wicked!”* (22:18b.) Indeed, the righteous shall witness God’s judgment upon them and rejoice when God takes vengeance against them (22:19-20.)

Having identified Job as a wicked man who thinks his ways are hidden from God and who has no desire to fellowship with God, Eliphaz now urges Job to repent

(22:21-30.) Job is instructed to *“submit [to God] and be at peace [with him]”* (22:21.) He is instructed to return to the LORD (22:23) and seek His mercy. This is the very counsel the prophet Isaiah gives to the wicked:

Seek Jehovah while he may be found; call to him while he is near. ⁷Let the wicked man forsake his way, and let the unrighteous man [forsake] his thoughts. Let him return to Jehovah, and he will have mercy on him. [Let him return] to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. (Isa. 55:6-7)

Job is to submit himself to God: *“Accept instruction from his mouth and put his words into your heart”* (22:22.) Eliphaz assures Job that if he returns to the Almighty and turns away from sin he will be blessed (22:23.) Job should treat his wealth as a worthless thing—viewing the fine gold of Ophir as though it were merely rocks in the ravine—and by so doing the Almighty will be his treasure (22:24-25.) Eliphaz gives this counsel to Job because he fears that it is Job’s love of earthly wealth that is the chief cause of his iniquitous life.

If Job heeds Eliphaz’s counsel he can be assured of entering into fellowship with God. Job will delight himself in the Almighty, and he shall lift up his face to God (22:26.) Job’s prayer shall be heard (22:27;) especially, his prayer for deliverance from his present condition of affliction. Job shall experience the blessing of having divine light shed upon his pathway (22:28;) he will have God’s guidance, leading him into the way of life and blessing. Job will become a source of blessing to others; able to be used by God to encourage and uplift those who are downcast (22:29.) Indeed, by virtue of his righteousness, which is of great value before God, Job will become an intercessor and mediator for others (22:30.) Compare James 5:16b, *“The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”*

Job now responds to Eliphaz’s counsel by crying out, *“If only I knew where to find him [God,] so that I might come to his throne”* (23:3.) Eliphaz has instructed Job to seek God and return unto Him (22:21.) Job’s response is that he earnestly desires to draw near to God, but God has hidden Himself from Job (23:3.) In anguish of soul, Job explains his plight: in whichever direction he turns in his effort to find God, he fails to meet Him, God hides himself (23:8-9.)

What light does the New Testament shed upon this perplexing question, Why does God hide Himself from the believer?

The answer must be found in the mysterious phenomenon that the Christian shares in *“the fellowship of [Christ’s] sufferings”* (Phil. 3:10.) To a limited extent, Job was experiencing the kind of thing our Lord experienced upon the cross of Calvary:

When the sixth hour [of the day] arrived, darkness [fell] over the whole land until the ninth hour. ³⁴At the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, Eloi,

Eloi, lama sabachthani? (which, being interpreted, means, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?) (Mk. 15:33-34.)

At such times when we share in the agonizing experience of Job, may we take heart from the Lord's own word to us as recorded in John 16:22: *"So it is that you [will] now have grief; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you."* May we, by God's grace, imitate our faithful Savior who, even in His darkest hour, entrusted Himself to His heavenly Father: *"Jesus called out with a loud voice, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.' When he had said this, he breathed his last"* (Lk. 23:46.)

II. Why Does God Cause the Righteous to Suffer?

Job desires to appear before God so that he might present his case before Him (23:4.) Job wants to present his complaint unto God and seek answers to his perplexing questions (23:4-5.) Job is confident that God would not oppose him with his awesome judicial power (23:6-7;) God would not overwhelm Job by His awesome divine majesty as the Judge of all the earth, causing Job to be swept away without a hearing. On the contrary, Job has the assurance that God would acquit him: God would acknowledge Job's righteousness and, in His capacity as the righteous Judge of all the earth, would deliver Job from his present state of affliction, restoring him to the divine fellowship. Thus Job expresses his firm conviction that God is righteous, He is just and will execute justice.

Job is confident that he is a righteous man and that this fact is known by God; he confesses of God, *"he knows the way that I take"* (23:10a.) Furthermore, if God were to test Job (to discern the state of his heart,) if God were to expose Job to the intense fires of trial, Job is sure that he would come forth as gold (23:10b)—Job would prove himself to be a pious, devout man who is thoroughly committed to God.

Job submits his own testimony as to his righteousness (23:11-12): his foot has firmly held to God's steps (23:11)—Job has steadfastly followed God, walking in His way step by step. Job has, indeed, treasured up God's Word, loving it more than his necessary food (23:12)—here is a rebuttal to the false charge Eliphaz has made against him (cp. 22:24-26.) Job testifies that God is righteous (23:6b-7.) He further affirms that he himself is a righteous man (23:10-12,) and yet he finds himself suffering inexplicable isolation from God: the righteous man is suffering the fate of the wicked.

At this point all Job is able to do is attribute this apparent anomaly to the inscrutable sovereignty of God (23:13-14.) Job testifies of God, *"He stands alone [as God]; who is able to change him?"* (23:13a.) In His sovereign majesty, God is inscrutable, beyond human comprehension—He is totally beyond man's grasp. *"He does whatever he pleases"* (23:13b.) Job is acknowledging God's sovereign will and power, God's divine freedom of action. Like it or not, Job is subjected to

God's sovereign will: *"He will carry out what he has appointed for me"* (23:14.) God is carrying out to fulfillment the plan He has for Job's life, and there is nothing Job can do about it other than accept it.

When he contemplates God's inscrutable sovereignty as that sovereign will now directs his life into paths of adversity and agony of soul, Job testifies that he is terrified at God's presence (23:15-17.) Job has expressed his desire to have a direct encounter with God, and he has been frustrated that he cannot come face to face with the Almighty (23:8-9.) But as he contemplates the person of God, who God is and how God is presently dealing with him (23:13-14,) Job discovers that at this very moment he is, indeed, having an encounter with God and this terrifies him: *"I am terrified before him; ... God has made my heart faint; the Almighty has terrified me"* (23:15-16.) In the very darkness that has hidden God from view, Job has had an encounter with God (23:17)—an encounter with God in the divine darkness of His sovereign, inscrutable being, as did Abraham at the time God made a covenant with him:

And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and a horror of great darkness fell upon him. ¹³And he said to Abram, Know for sure that your descendants shall be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and they shall serve the inhabitants of that land; and that nation shall afflict your descendants for four hundred years. ¹⁴But also know that I will judge that nation whom they shall serve; and afterward shall they come out with great possessions. (Gen. 15:12-14)

Here, in a surprising and unexpected way, is revealed the mercy of God: if Job feels terrified when he is exposed to a faint, "indirect," hidden encounter with God, he would be totally overwhelmed if, at this point, he were granted a direct encounter with the Almighty.

What further light does the New Testament shed upon the question, Why does God cause the righteous to suffer?

The LORD may subject the Christian to suffering and trial as a means of pruning the Christian so that he may bear more fruit:

I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener. ²He removes every branch in me that does not bear fruit. But he prunes every branch that does bear fruit, so that it may bear more fruit. (Jn. 15:1-2)

The LORD may subject the Christian to suffering and trial as a means of proving and purifying his faith:

...now for a little while, since it is necessary, you have been brought to grief by all kinds of trials. ⁷[This has happened] so that the genuineness of your faith—[being of] greater value than gold which perishes—having been tested by fire,

may be verified, [resulting] in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (1 Pet.1:6-7)

This is precisely what was happening to Job, although he appears to have been unaware of it. Ironically, he speaks of God's testing fires (23:10,) but does not seem to realize that even now he is being subjected to those very fires.

We must acknowledge God's inscrutable sovereignty: God is our righteous Creator whose ways are beyond the complete comprehension of us His creatures and who has the right to do with us as He sees fit according to His holy will. Consider the testimony of the prophet Jeremiah,

Then the word of Jehovah came to me, saying, ⁶ "O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter does?" declares Jehovah. "Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel." (Jer. 18:5-6)

Job has some understanding of this great truth (23:13-14,) but it leaves him terrified (23:15-17.) But in the light of Job's final experience, and the greater light of New Testament revelation, the Christian can have a sure confidence: *"Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand"* (Rom. 14:4.) Finally, there will be given full—although not divinely definitive—understanding:

Jesus replied, "You do not now understand what I am doing; but later you will understand." (Jn. 13:7)

At present we see an obscure image in a mirror, but then [we will see] face to face. At present I know [things] partially; but then I will know fully, just as I am fully known. (1 Cor. 13:12)

III. Why Does God Tolerate the Wicked?

Job asks the question with which the righteous at times struggle: *"Since [our] times are not hidden from the Almighty, why do those who know him never see his days [of judgment]?"* (24:1) Since nothing is hidden from the Almighty, why does He not take action against the wicked?

Job now proceeds to describe cases of civil injustice—injustice that surely is not hidden from the Almighty, yet He takes no immediate action against the perpetrators (24:2-12.) There are instances where wicked men move boundary stones (24:2.) They do so to unscrupulously increase the borders of their own land or to acquire a choice piece of property that lies just beyond their border; and then they nonchalantly pasture the flocks they have stolen. They take advantage of the orphan and the widow (24:3)—the most helpless people of society become the victims of their greed and self-aggrandizement.

So cruel and vicious are these men that they force all the poor of the land into hiding (24:4.) These poor are described as having to ravage the wilderness for their food like the wild donkey, even though they glean the harvest for the wicked (24:5-6)—the wicked are so cruel as to forbid their workers from even partaking of the harvest. This is a direct violation of the Levitical law:

When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. ¹⁰Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am Jehovah your God. (Lev. 19:9-10)

These poor laborers lie all night naked with no covering from the cold; they are exposed to the rain and seek shelter in the cleft of the rock (24:7-8.) The wretched condition of the poor is attributed to the treatment they receive at the hands of the wicked. The wicked who even go so far as to seize the widow's infant as a pledge against her debts and think nothing of taking the garments of the poor as a pledge—the very poor who reap the harvest for the wicked (but who cannot eat of it) and who tread their winepresses (but who are not allowed to quench their thirst with the very wine they are making) (24:9-11.) Being subjected to such oppression, *"The groans of the dying rise from the city, and the souls of the wounded cry out [for help]"* (24:12a.) "But God charges no one with wrongdoing" (24:12b.) Even though the oppressed cry out, God does not intervene by taking action against the wicked. (Note: Elihu will address this subject, see commentary on 35:9-13.)

Job now goes on to describe cases of criminal injustice—again, acts of injustice that are not hidden from the Almighty, but He takes no immediate action against the perpetrators (24:13-17.) Job speaks of those *"who rebel against the light"* (24:13)—those who are the notorious rebels of society; the lawless, the godless, the infidel, the blasphemer. He goes on to speak about the murderer who kills his helpless victims during the broad daylight and is a thief during the night (24:14)—here is a constant life of crime. Then there is the adulterer who waits for the twilight, confident that no one will detect his evil practices in the dark (24:15.) All of these criminals together operate in the darkness of night and want nothing to do with the light (24:16)—both literally and spiritually they operate in the darkness and belong to the darkness: *"They are friends with the terrors of darkness"* (24:17)—darkness is their natural element.

In righteous indignation, Job now utters a curse upon the wicked (24:18-20.) Job describes the wicked as being *"[like] foam on the surface of the water"* (24:18a.) There is nothing substantial about them, they are morally worthless, and as such, have no firm foundation. Job's desire is that just as heat and drought snatch away the melting snow, *"so let Sheol [the place of the dead] snatch away those who have sinned!"* (24:19)—just as swiftly as the snow melts in the spring, so swiftly may the wicked pass out of this life into death

Job further expresses his indignation against the wicked; may they meet with an ignominious end (24:20): *“let the womb forget them,”*—let their own mothers put them out of mind and disown them; *“let the worm feast on them,”*—may their bodies rot and be consumed by the worms; *“let them no longer be remembered,”*—let no one honor their memory after their death. Then comes Job’s concluding word of curse: *“let wickedness be broken like a tree [shattered by lightning]!”* (24:20c)—like a tree that is split by a lightning bolt or its boughs broken by a strong wind, so may the wicked deeds of wicked men be shattered and brought to an end.

Having expressed his righteous indignation against the wicked, Job now expresses his surprise and dismay over the fact that he does not witness God Himself cursing the wicked (24:21-25.) Once again Job calls attention to the deeds of these wicked men, stressing that the wicked are, indeed, wicked: *“they prey on the barren and childless woman”* (24:21)—the wicked man is as cruel and heartless as a wild beast.

Yet, rather than executing swift judgment against such a despicable man, God preserves these men by his divine power (24:22.) God grants them security and *“his eyes are on all their ways”* (24:23.) God watches over them, affording them protection, not scrutinizing their every deed so as to bear irrefutable testimony against them—contrast Job’s present statement with his lament in 7:17-19 where he protests that God is constantly scrutinizing his every moment. Indeed, rather than coming to an ignominious end, God grants the wicked to be exalted—then, at the end of their brief time on earth, *“like all the [rest of men],”* they are cut off like heads of grain (24:24.) At the end of their days they are swiftly taken out of this world (spared from suffering a long and agonizing death.) Furthermore, all men finally experience the same fate of death: there is in this matter no distinction between the wicked and the righteous—such is Job’s contention. Job concludes by challenging anyone to refute his claims and demonstrate that what he has asserted with regard to the wicked is not the case (24:25.)

What further light does the New Testament shed upon this question, Why does God tolerate the wicked?

The New Testament affirms that there is coming a day of final judgment, and the resurrection of Jesus is the proof of that fact: *“[God] has appointed a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead”* (Acts 17:31.)

The New Testament emphasizes that God’s patience and longsuffering are intended to lead men to repentance. If they do not avail themselves of this day of grace, their judgment will, indeed, be inescapable:

Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness [is intended to] lead you to repentance? ⁵But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. ⁶God will repay each person according to what he has done. (Rom. 2:4-6)

Note: There are occasions when God does execute swift judgments against wicked men (see the examples below,) although such instances are exceptional, they are evidence of God's righteousness and they are precursors of the final judgment.

Er and Onan:

Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of Jehovah; therefore Jehovah put him to death. ⁸Then Judah said to Onan, "Lie with your brother's wife and fulfill your duty to her as a brother-in-law to produce offspring for your brother." ⁹But Onan knew that the offspring would not be his; so whenever he lay with his brother's wife, he spilled his semen on the ground to keep from producing offspring for his brother. ¹⁰What he did was wicked in the sight of Jehovah; so he put him to death also. (Gen. 38:7-10)

Nabal:

Nabal's servants say of him, "He is such a wicked man that no one can talk to him." (1 Sam. 25:17) About ten days later, Jehovah struck Nabal and he died. (1 Sam. 25:38)

Herod:

Then Herod went from Judea to Caesarea and stayed there a while. ²⁰He had been quarreling with the people of Tyre and Sidon; they now joined together and sought an audience with him. Having secured the support of Blastus, a trusted personal servant of the king, they asked for peace, because they depended on the king's country for their food supply. ²¹On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people. ²²They shouted, "This is the voice of a god, not of a man." ²³Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died. (Acts 12:20-23)

Conclusion

Job raises some perplexing questions which no doubt baffled the believers who lived in the Old Testament era. Thanks be to God that the New Testament revelation sheds further light on these matters. But let us remember that the final word will be given when Christ finally appears in glory. As the hymn writer expresses it, referring

to that last great day: All now mysterious shall be bright at last (Katharina von Schlegel.)