

“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”
October 12, 2016

Ezekiel 24:1–25:17. More divine judgment on believers and unbelievers.

Revelation 11:15–12:17. Loving God more than life.

Job 36:1–12. Divine correction and love.

COMMENTS.

Ezekiel 24:1–25:17. This reading can be divided into three parts. *First, The Cooking Pot (24:1-14):* On the very day when the Babylonians began their siege of Jerusalem (January 15, 588 B.C.), the Lord gave Ezekiel a parable illustrating the city’s downfall. Jerusalem was like a cooking pot, which had been encrusted with deposits (its bloodshed and idolatry). The inhabitants of Jerusalem were like meat and bones cooking inside the pot. The fire burning beneath the pot (the Babylonian siege) would thoroughly cook the meat and char the bones, both of which would eventually be removed piece by piece (a picture of the exile). The empty pot would then be left on the fire until its impurities were burned away. *Second, The Death of Ezekiel’s Wife (24:15-27):* The Lord announced to Ezekiel that his beloved wife was about to die suddenly. However, as an object lesson to Israel, the Lord commanded the prophet not to mourn outwardly over her death, as was the custom. Instead he could only groan to himself. When his wife died shortly thereafter, Ezekiel obeyed the Lord’s instructions. When the people observed his silence, they inquired about its significance. He explained that they were not to mourn publicly over the downfall of their beloved city and its temple, just as he refused to lament over his wife’s death. When Jerusalem finally fell, a fugitive would bring Ezekiel the news. At that time the Lord would remove Ezekiel’s muteness (see 3:26–27; 33:21–22). He would now speak openly and freely with the survivors of the catastrophe, warning and encouraging them. *Third, Judgment upon Ammon (25:1-17):* The Lord would judge the Ammonites because they rejoiced over Jerusalem’s fall. “People of the East,” either the Babylonians or marauding tribes from the desert, would plunder Ammon and reduce Rabbah, its most prominent city, to a pasture land.

Life in God by proper knowledge and by proper love. God killed Ezekiel’s wife! We must never forget that we were given the gift of life and eternal life and are sustained daily and are wired to love God above anyone and everyone. This includes one’s family. To put family before God is to corrupt the family into being an idol. Given that we are to love and cherish our families, it is not difficult to see how easy it is to make husband, wife, or children into an idol. However, to do this is to corrupt self as well as them. To do so is also to deprive them of the blessings of an otherwise Christ-centered life that lives in and partakes of the nature of God. Just as a person who worships an idol in a pagan temple will bring corruption in his family so, too, one who worships the family. As far as wives, the study of the wives of prophets is interesting. Moses was criticized for the wife he chose (Num. 12:1), and Isaiah’s wife was a prophetess (Isa. 8:3). She bore him at least two sons whose names were signs to the people of Judah. The Prophet Jeremiah wasn’t allowed to have a wife (Jer. 16:1–4), and this was a sign to the Jews that judgment was coming and people would wish they had never married and brought children into the world. Hosea’s wife became a prostitute and he had to buy her out of the slave market (Hosea 1–3). There is far more departure from the Lord by attaching oneself to what is in

itself a good, like family, than from those who deliberately get involved in illicit activity—because it is so subtle given that families are blessings from the Lord. However, as blessings we are to appreciate them in light of the Lord and His grace rather than worship them. Only by walking in the Lord *by proper knowledge and by proper love* can we keep the proper balance and be blessings to our families and loved ones as we are blessed by God Himself.

Revelation 11:15–12:17. In this section we have the blowing of the seventh trumpet (**11:15-19**) and the woman clothed with the sun (**12:1-6**). The latter is a vision epitomizing the gospel message and the life of the church. A divinely appointed woman gives birth to a child, the Messiah, who will rule the earth. He is taken up to heaven while the woman and her other offspring are subjected to the persecutions of the dragon. The dragon's story is also told. He started a rebellion in heaven and was cast out after a war with God's hosts—Michael and his angels. He finds himself on earth where he vents his fury upon those who are siblings of the Messiah, who has taken his place at the throne of God. In all of this God supernaturally protects his own. In **12:7-12** we have war in Heaven: Satan is furious, but unable to prevail in Heaven. Evil has no place there, so he is hurled down to earth to persecute the saints. In a vision Jesus saw this as well (Luke 10:18; John 12:31). Satan's many names are given here—dragon, serpent, devil, and Satan. His mission is to “lead the whole world astray.” We must always remember that he is a liar and the source of all evil and untruth (John 8:44). He cannot be trusted or believed. Only God is true, and ultimately righteousness will triumph.

Life in God by proper knowledge and by proper love. In this reading Satan is very angry. In **12:10** he fights the saints by accusing them. But Jesus Christ, the “Heavenly Advocate” (1 John 2:1–2), represents the church before God's holy throne. Because Jesus Christ died for us, we can overcome Satan's accusations “by the blood of the Lamb.” Our salvation is secure, not because of our own works, but because of His finished work at Calvary. How furious Satan will be when the church comes forth in glory “without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.” When the accuser sees that his tactics have failed, he will become angry and threaten the very peace of heaven. The same serpent who accuses the saints in heaven also deceives the nations on earth (**12:9**); and one of his strategies is to lie about the church. He deceives the nations into thinking that the people of God are dangerous, deluded, even destructive. Is this not the attitude that was recently revealed in the leaked e-mails of one of our presidential candidates? The times described in Revelation are horrendous. However, the only thing that gives the believer the power over fear, even fear of death, is love relationship with God: Revelation 12:11, “*And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.*” It is unfortunate that so many Christians today live in fear of Hilary. However, those who live in God *by proper knowledge and proper love* understand all too well that God controls history.

Job 36:1–12. Elihu now attempts to soften his harsh tones and asks Job to bear with him a little longer as he addresses the discipline of suffering (2–15). He is still arrogant, however, for he claims to speak on God’s behalf and to secure his knowledge from afar, obviously from God himself. He is confident that his words are not false and that he is “perfect in knowledge” (4). This perfection does not pertain so much to the extent of Elihu’s knowledge as it does to the accuracy of his knowledge. It is complete (the same Hebrew word as in 1:1 and 2:3, when Job is said to be blameless or complete). Contrary to Job’s claim, Elihu insists that the life of the wicked is not prolonged. Neither does God take his eyes off the righteous. When affliction comes and divine assistance is delayed, there is a purpose. It is to alert the righteous to their sins and to lead them to repentance. God speaks through adversity. If the righteous learn from such discipline, prosperity and contentment will follow; but if they do not learn, they will die without knowledge. Elihu’s thesis is clear: sufferings are God’s discipline to teach lessons and fools despise correction.

Life in God by proper knowledge and by proper love. Again, Elihu was right in many things he said if we apply them on a general level—God does discipline believers for their sins. However, there are exceptions, for example, Job was suffering and it was not because of sins. Elihu notes that God keeps His eyes on the righteous (7) and eventually transforms their circumstances. He lifts them from the ash heap to the throne and sets them free from their chains (7–8). He chastens us that He might correct us and teach us the right way to live. If we learn our lesson and obey, He will bless us once again. But if we rebel, He will destroy us (9–12). The key, once again, is knowledge and love. The believer who lives *by proper knowledge and proper love* will think more of the Lord and making adjustments in his life when he disciplined for getting distracted and getting involved in illicit activities. However, the one who really does not love the Lord will become more antagonistic to the Lord precisely because he values himself and his things more than a relationship with God as such.

Life in God by proper knowledge and by proper love.

Pastor Don