

I mentioned a few weeks ago that Elihu is overall right in his confrontation and correction of Job and his three friends. This doesn't mean that everything he says is right; as I also mentioned, his quotations of Job at times makes him sound worse than he was, and he at times he speaks of Job in overly harsh ways.

Elihu spoke to Job's friends in chapter 32, and Job himself in chapter 33, thus the question becomes, who does Elihu address in chapter 34? He refers to them as "wise men" (v2) and "men of understanding" (v10, v34).

Well, it seems likely that while he's including Job's friends, he has a wider audience in mind. In fact, the entire chapter reads like an academic paper given before scholarly spectators. Elihu appeals to the Academy of Wise Men to validate his assessment of Job.

Derek Thomas—"Elihu's second speech is very different from his first in content and tone. All compassion has gone. Those promising words about a mediator in the heavenly courts defending the cause of the likes of Job have also disappeared. Here, in the second speech, is the sound of cold, analytical logic."

Now, having said that, I also suggest there are several wonderful statements made by Job about testing words, the nature of God reign, and the purpose of chastisement. Thus, I intend to examine the chapter under three headings, focusing on a single theme in each one.

- I. Elihu Confronts Job (vv1-9)
- II. Elihu Defends God (vv10-30)
- III. Elihu Exhorts Job (vv31-37)

I. Elihu Confronts Job (vv1-9)

1. The phrase "Elihu further answered and said" indicates a transition from his first speech (32-33) to his second (34).
2. V2—"Hear my words, you wise men; give ear to me, you who have knowledge"—as I've said, while I believe this may include Job's friends, it definitely exceeds them.
3. And the reason I say this is evident—in chapter 32 when he addressed these three men, Elihu never referred to them as "wise men" "who have knowledge."
4. Thus, it's best to understand Elihu as addressing a broader and larger audience than Job and his three friends.
5. As I said in my introduction, I believe Elihu is here presenting his case before the entire class or academy.
6. V3—"For the ear tests words as the palate tastes food"—he's exhorting them to test the quality of his words.
7. He wants them to test his words as you would test food—for example, if someone gave you something to eat that you've never eaten before, you would first taste it to see if it was good (before you ate the entire thing).
8. This is exactly what Elihu is saying—"Before you swallow everything I'm about to say, test and see if it's good."
9. V4—"Let us choose justice for ourselves; let us know among ourselves what is good"—test and see whether or not what I'm telling you is just and good.
10. V5—"For Job has said, 'I am righteous, but God has taken away my justice; should I lie concerning my right? My wound is incurable, though I am without transgression.'"

11. Now as I said last week, whenever Elihu quotes Job, he always makes him look as bad as he possible can.
12. Thus, while most of what Elihu quotes Job as saying is true, he paraphrases it in the worst possible way.
13. But to fair to Elihu, Job said many things that were over-the-top and dishonoring to God (and for this Job deserves confrontation).
14. Perhaps the best way to describe Elihu's quotations of Job is to describe them as exaggerations or overstatements.
15. In short, Job accused God of injustice—of dealing with him unfairly—of being harsh and strict toward him.
16. Verses 7-8—"What man is like Job, who drinks scorn like water, who goes in company with the workers of iniquity, and walks with wicked men?"
17. These two verses are difficult to understand—if by them Elihu is accusing Job of being scornful and affiliating with wicked men, then he's simply wrong.
18. In fact, this is precisely what Job's three friends said about him—that he was a secret sinner and hypocrite.
19. I think it's largely a response to what Job is quoted as having said in vv7-8—"Job are, a mere man that drinks iniquity like water, going to challenge the holy and just God?"
20. V9—"For he has said, 'It profits a man nothing that he should delight in God'" —this is actually a mis-quotation of Job.
21. If you remember back in chapter 21:14, that the wicked say—"Depart from us, for we do not desire the knowledge of Your ways."
22. Lesson—words must be tested to determine whether or not they are good or bad—don't believe everything you hear.
23. Everything we hear must be tested and tried to determine its quality—whether it's good for us or not.
24. Heb.5:13-14—"For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who be reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."
25. Isa.8:20—"To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."
26. (a) Teaching and preaching, Acts 17:11—"These (the Bereans) were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so."
27. (b) Counsel and advice—when someone gives you counsel compare it to the overall teaching of Scripture.
28. (c) Social views—think of the various ways of viewing society—Christians must taste these before they swallow them.
29. Think of all the competing "theories" that are floating around today—we must test these by the word of God.
30. For example, think of what's been called Critical Race Theory—this is being swallowed by the masses without even tasting it first.
31. What are its roots? What are its basic assertions? Don't swallow it (believe it) without first tasting it.

II. Elihu Defends God (vv10-30)

1. Within this section, Elihu comes to his main point—to vindicate God from the false accusations of Job.

2. Within vv5-6, Elihu quoted Job as questioning God's integrity and justice (to what extent Job did this is another question).
3. But from Elihu's perspective, Job had questioned God's justice and so now he's determined to defend Him.
4. (1) God is just, vv10-12—"Therefore listen to me, you men of understanding: far be it from God to do wickedness, and from the Almighty to commit iniquity."
5. Simply put, God is too pure and holy to act unjustly—it's impossible for God to act contrary to His nature.
6. V11—"For He repays man according to his work, and makes man to find a reward according to his way"—He deals with every man fairly and with equity.
7. V12—"Surely God will never do wickedly, nor will the Almighty pervert justice"—because God is just, He acts justly.
8. (2) He is sovereign (vv13-15), v13—"Who gave Him charge over the earth? Or who appointed Him over the whole world?"
9. The answer is obvious—no one—no one gives God the right to rule or reign over His creation—it's His.
10. V14—"If He should set His heart on it, if He should gather to Himself His Spirit and His brethren all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust."
11. In other words, creation comes from God—it's dependent upon Him for its existence—He sustains it.
12. If thing back several months to an earlier chapter, I mentioned there's two branches to God's providence—governance and preservation.
13. (3) He is impartial (vv16-20), v16—"If you have understanding, hear this; listen to the sound of my words"—again he's speaking before the jury.
14. V17a—"Should one who hates justice govern"—that is, could the creator and governor of the world hates justice?
15. V17b—"Will you condemn Him who is most just?"—the latter half of v17 actually explains the first part.
16. V18—"Is it fitting to say to a king 'You are worthless,' and to nobles, 'You are wicked'"—if it's wrong to speak of earthly rulers in this way, how much more is it evil to suggest that God is worthless unjust.
17. V19—"Yet He is not partial to princes, nor does He regard the rich more than the poor; for they are all the work of His hands."
18. Because He is a righteous and just Ruler, He doesn't show partiality to any group of people—He deals with people equally.
19. V20—"In a moment they die, in the middle of the night; the people are shaken and pass away; the mighty are taken away without a hand."
20. This is proof of His impartial rule—the poor and the rich, the weak and the mighty, are all taken away by death.
21. (4) He is all-knowing (vv21-30), vv21-22—"For His eyes are on the ways of man, and He sees all his steps. There is no darkness nor shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves."
22. V23—"For He need not further consider a man, that he should go before God in judgment"—God already perfectly knows every man.
23. Verses 24-25—"He breaks in pieces mighty men without inquiry, and sets others in their place. Therefore He knows their works; He overthrows them in the night, and they are crushed."
24. V26—"He strikes them as wicked men in the open sight of others"—this refers to God's present judgments in the world.

25. V27—"Because they turned back from Him, and would not consider any of His ways, so that they caused the cry of the poor to come to Him; for He hears the cry of the afflicted."
26. The mighty are guilty of two evils—first, they refused to serve God for themselves; second, they afflict and mistreat the poor.
27. V29—"When He gives quietness, who then can make trouble? And when He hides His face, who then can see Him, whether it is against a nation or a man alone?"
28. This Hebrew word translated "quietness" (NLJV, KJV) refers to a "calm of spirit" or a "restful spirit."
29. The idea is that of a calm and quiet person—someone filled with peace and tranquility—someone who is silent.
30. Now, most translations understand this quietness, as something God gives, either to a nation or individual.
31. If God gives a nation, or an individual, this rest and calmness, "who then can make trouble"—who can disrupt what God gives.
32. In contrast to this—"when He hides His face, who then can see Him"—hiding His face is the opposite of giving quietness.
33. If God causes His face to shine upon us, He gives us peace, but if He hides Himself, there's only trouble.
34. Thus, v29 is really contrasting peace and trouble that both come from God and is known by nations and individuals.
35. CHS—"If God gives quietness to the spirit, nobody can really trouble you. When Christ has once spoken peace to our heart, and given us a holy calm, then are we glad because we be quiet, and who is he that can raise a storm in our soul again? 'The peace of God, which passes all understanding, also passes all distraction. It cannot be broken by all the devils in hell. Oh, how blessed is this assurance!'"
36. V30—"That the hypocrite should not reign, lest the people be ensnared"—by the hypocrite is meant an evil and godless man.
37. This is in contrast to the rule or reign of God—God ultimately is the single Ruler of heaven and earth.
38. Albert Barnes—"The general scope of the remarks of Elihu is, that God is the universal Sovereign; that He has all people under His control, and that there are none so powerful as to be able to resist His will."
39. Lesson—Christ is a glorious and just Ruler who reigns over His kingdom with equity and righteousness.
40. Historically, we distinguish between Christ's kingdom of power and His kingdom of grace—by kingdom is meant rule or reign.
41. Thus, by His kingdom of power, we refer to His rule or reign over the wicked (scattered over the world).
42. And by His kingdom of grace, we refer to His rule or reign over the righteous (and He reigns within the church).
43. Thus, there are but to kingdoms on earth, and ultimately, in the final sense, Christ reigns over them both (but this doesn't mean He reigns over both in the same way).
44. (1) His kingdom of power—Christ rules over the "kingdoms of this world" in power and with justice.
45. He raises up earthly kings and princes and He removes them—they will eventually give account to Him.
46. He shows no partiality—the rich and mighty will be judged just as the poor and helpless will be judged.

47. Thus, while earthly rulers promote injustice and oppression, He will eventually right every wrong (He sees every deed and hears every word).
48. (2) His kingdom of grace—this of course takes place within the church and in the hearts of His people.
49. Similar to the kingdom of power, Christ rules within His kingdom of grace through men called elders (and they too are accountable to Him for the way they rule).
50. Thus, while there are men that rule within the church, there is only one King and that is Christ Himself.
51. And while He may give an external peace and calm to various nations within His kingdom of power, He only gives true peace and calm to this nation.
52. There is only one King who is perfectly just and one nation without oppression, and that's Christ and His church.

III. Elihu Exhorts Job (vv31-37)

1. I understand vv31-33 to be directed toward Job—having defended God's justice in the previous verses, Elihu now seeks to apply these truths to Job.
2. Within vv31-33, Elihu is asking a question of Job—is this true of you? Have you borne chastisement in this way?"
3. Thus, when he says—"For has anyone said to God" what he really means is this—"For have you said to God."
4. In other words, within vv31-32, we the proper response to chastisement—this is what we all should say.
5. V33—"Should He repay it according to your terms, just because you disavow it? You must choose, and not I; therefore speak what you know."
6. This verse is difficult to understand—if you compare the various translations, you'll find substantial differences.
7. I believe what Elihu is saying is this—"should God have to restore you on your terms, just because you disagree with His treatment of you?"
8. "Look Job, I hope that sounds crazy to you, and when it comes right down to it—it's your choice not mine."
9. "You have to decide for yourself whether or not God's dealings with you have been justified, and you need to determine whether or not you've responded rightly to that discipline."
10. Within vv34-35, Elihu appeals to the judgment or opinion of the wise men—he quotes them in verse 35.
11. V34—"Men of understanding way to me, wise men who listen to me: 'Job speaks without knowledge, his words are without wisdom.'"
12. Verse 35 is one reason I believe Elihu's audience includes Job's friends (as this is a paraphrase of what they've said).
13. From his comments that follow, in vv36-37, it appears he largely (if not totally) agrees with their assessment.
14. V36—"Oh, that Job were tried to the utmost, because his answers are like those of wicked men! For he adds rebellion to his sin; he claps his hands among us, against God."
15. Elihu wishes that Job would be "tried to the utmost"—that is, fully tried or examined by God Himself.
16. The reason is rather straightforward—"because his answers are like those of wicked men"—he's spoken evil of God.
17. V37—"For he adds rebellion to his sin; he claps his hands among us, against God"—the word rendered "rebellion" is usually translated "transgression."

18. Elihu is claiming that Job is adding transgression to his sin—he's added additional sin to previous sin.
19. Thus, the question becomes—what does Elihu mean by additional sin and what does he mean by previous sin.
20. Well, by previous sin he means his foolish statements against God, and by additional sin he means his refusal to listen and repent.
21. V37b—"he claps his hands among us"—he clapped his hands as a sign of unwillingness to listen or learn.
22. V37b—"and multiples his words against God"—that is, Job continues his sin of speaking against God.
23. CHS—"Well, thank God, we are not going to be judged by Elihu, nor by any other of our fellow-creatures; to our own Master we stand or fall, and if we trust in him, he will make us to stand even in the great day of judgment itself, blessed be his holy name!"
24. This means we need to return to vv31-33 in closing—CHS preached a total of 5 sermons from this chapter (3 of them are on verses 31-33).
25. Verses 31-33, contain one of the fullest and most practical descriptions of Christian chastisement in the Bible.
26. And in some sense, it may be the most important passage in Elihu's four speeches (as it gets to the heart of God's dealings with Job).
27. Why was God afflicted Job the way He was? Was it because he was a secret sinner or a wicked man?
28. No! He was a righteous man, and yet, Job needed was very a sinless man and thus needed further purifying.
29. Now, if you remember, on several occasions, when Job was thinking more clearly, he actually confessed this.
30. Job 23:10—"But He knows the way that I take; when He has tested (tried) me, I shall come forth as gold."
31. Lesson—It's the duty of every Christian, to patiently and humbly endure the stern and loving rod of God.
32. (1) Submission—"I have borne chastening"—the word rendered "borne" refer to bearing a heavy load.
33. The word "chastening" or "punishment" isn't present in the original but is rightly supplied by the translators.
34. To "bear chastisement" doesn't mean you merely endure it, but that you humbly and lovingly submit to it.
35. For example, let's say your 5 years old and you've disobeyed your father and he's now going to discipline you.
36. And so, you begin the long walk up the stairs to his study (as it happened in our house) to be spanked.
37. You don't run from him—you don't complain to him—and you don't resist him when he applies the rod—you submit (but remember, submission is more than outward, it's also inward).
38. (2) Resolution—"I will offend no more"—by this I mean, you determine, by God's grace, not to repeat the offense.
39. (3) Instruction—"Teach me what I do not see; if I have done iniquity, I will do no more"—that is, you desire to embrace the rod as a means of instruction.
40. When I was younger, we lived for a few years in TX—and back then they allowed spanking in public schools (I remember a teacher who had written on his wooden paddle – 'Board of Education').