

“Behold, God...”

Job 36:1-37:24

Elihu is continuing his attack on Job, making his point that Job’s trial was because of his attitude toward God, thinking he was above anything God could do. Job’s other three friends basically said that Job’s trial was because of some hidden sin, and, while Elihu eludes to that, he took a loftier approach, pointing out that he thought Job was being disciplined and “put in his place” by God because of his self-righteous attitude.

In these two chapters, Elihu is once again making some very important points about God, imparting great truths about Him. Everything Elihu says isn’t necessarily accurate, but, in relation to his opinion of Job’s situation, what he says about God is, for the most part, correct. We can learn some truths about God from this that will help us in our trials. It’s nothing we haven’t seen before in the book of Job, and they are truths that are repeated over and over throughout Scripture – but, nonetheless, they are still worth learning – again.

This “chapter” begins differently than the previous three portions of Elihu’s initial discourse. The previous three showed a pause in the word structure to allow Job time to respond. This portion begins with no pause. “Job is to wait yet a little while, for he still has, or: there still are, words in favor of Eloah [God]; i.e., what may be said in vindication of God against Job’s complaints and accusations is not yet exhausted” (K&D).

Verse two may indicate that Elihu had, to this point, been giving more of his opinion than any clear direction of what he perceived God wanting him to

say ("I have yet to speak on God's behalf" – literally, "that there are yet words to speak of on behalf of God." And these two chapters go on to speak of who God is and what God expects from His servants.

Verse four begins in a unique way with Elihu stating that what he has said, and what he is about to say (more specifically) is not something he made up nor is it something that others haven't said. "I will fetch my knowledge from afar." This same word for "from afar" – לְמִרְחֹק - is used in Isaiah 37:26 and is translated by the words, "long ago." This is to be understood as "out of the wide realm of history and nature" (K&D). Not only has this message about the LORD been seen and heard from far-away lands, but down through history as well.

Because of this attribute of his knowledge coming from "afar" – from history and nature – Elihu makes clear that all of it had the purpose of granting the righteousness to the LORD that He is due – bound in the term "my Maker." The word used for "Maker" here – וּלְפַעֵלִי - from פָּעַל - is a simple participle (verb used as a noun or adjective) that means to do or to make. The use of this as a proper name for God shows the idea behind what Elihu was saying and perhaps why.

Verse four comes across as maybe one of the most arrogant and prideful of all of the book of Job, if not all of Scripture. Although that is how it reads in English, and that is clearly the way that Elihu stated it, it may not be as arrogant as it seems. "One sincere in his opinions and mature in his knowledge of the subject in hand – no novice or tyro [a beginner], albeit young in years" (Preacher's Homiletical). From the context and the language structure, Elihu was apparently wanting to make sure he was heard and wanted those with Job to

know that he may be young, but he was far from ignorant. In the culture of the day it was necessary for him to be arrogant – but I believe he carried it too far and that is the reason for the English word order and translation we have (which is almost universally translated the same across the most widely accepted English translations).

All of that said, the remainder of chapter 36 and chapter 37 are all about Jehovah, and what a God He is!!

I. HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS – VS. 5-21

A. Everything God does is right and holy

B. The first point Elihu makes about God is in verse 5 where he states that "God is mighty...in strength and wisdom" – in the further explanation in the following verses he shows by that is meant God shows His might in His righteous dealings with man – only a perfectly righteous God could deal with man so perfectly.

C. Verses 6-12 Elihu makes a point about God that is based on his observation of how God has dealt with man.

1. Vs. 6-7a – God will not protect the wicked but will give that "right" of protection (justice) to the poor – this, by observation of history, isn't always the case, but for the purpose of eternity it certainly is.
2. Vs. 7b we find Elihu again eluding to "kings" in a positive way, as if God only puts those on the throne that are righteous

(this is one of those areas that Elihu is not correct on, but it is his opinion, which we have found before in his discourse with Job) – “He withdraweth not his eyes from the right but they (his eyes) are with kings on the throne” is another way to read this. The principle behind the “eyes of the Lord” on man is to show His authority and His righteousness in their affairs.

Psalm 33:18

18 Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy;

Psalm 34:15

15 The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.

1 Peter 3:12

12 For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.

3. Vs. 8-12 he shows that God is merciful to even kings that have gone against Him, and if they just come back and confess and forsake their sin, God will end their suffering and make things right again – this is for Job’s sake, indicating that Job was a leader among his people, possibly considered a king. This, by the way, is the principle that is seen throughout the Old Testament in the history of Israel and her kings – both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms.

D. Vs. 13-21 are for Job's sake specifically – Elihu addresses him regarding what Elihu perceived as God's judgment and chastisement on Job for his hypocrisy and self-righteousness.

1. What Elihu says here about those that defy God is right, and is found elsewhere in Scripture, and we need to make sure we don't forget it, for it applies to the believer as well.
2. Vs. 15 is one of great comfort to those that are in need and is seen as a contrast to what preceded it.
 - a) "He [God] delivereth the poor in his affliction" – the word for "poor" here – עָנִי – "refers to those who are suffering, in a state of poverty, oppression, misery from various causes" (Zodhiates). "The inquiry was not particularly respecting the "poor," but the "afflicted," and the sentiment which Elihu is illustrating is, that when the afflicted call upon God he will deliver them. The object is to induce Job to make such an application to God that he might be rescued from his calamities, and be permitted yet to enjoy life and happiness." (Barnes)
 - b) "And [He] openeth their ears in oppression" – or, opens their ears while they are oppressed. "[N]ot only to discipline, correction, and instruction, Job 36:10; but to hear comfortable words spoken, to them by the Lord; who, in the midst of their affliction and oppression, whispers in their ears, and tells them how he loves them, though they are rebuked and chastened by him; how he has chosen them to

everlasting life and happiness, though now in the furnace of affliction; that he is their covenant God and Father, and knows and owns their souls in adversity that he has pardoned all their sins, though he takes vengeance on their inventions; and in a little time will free them from all their afflictions and oppressions.”

3. Vs. 16 is another one of those that is not exactly accurate and according to other scripture – just because we get our lives right with God, or just because we are right with God already doesn’t mean everything is going to get better, and it doesn’t mean we will have a great life to the end – we need to be careful we don’t interpret this passage incorrectly, as many have done
4. Vs. 17-21 is Elihu continuing this line of reasoning – that all Job’s problems were because of sin and that God would continue to punish him for it.
 - a) Vs. 17 – “But with the judgment due the wicked you are filled” – Elihu speaking to Job directly and specifically. The second clause of the verse is an explanation (or restatement, parallelism) of the first.
 - b) Vs. 20 – “Desire not the night” – considering the context of the verses around this one, Elihu seems to be warning Job to not consider the night his friend for his wicked deeds.

John 3:19

19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their

deeds were evil.

E. We should be thankful that God doesn't always punish us for sin – that His mercy and grace and longsuffering, His goodness, gentleness, and kindness are just as real as His chastisement – a truth that seems lost on Elihu.

II. HIS SOVEREIGNTY – VS. 22-25

A. Everything God does is to satisfy His will.

B. Vs. 22 – God “exalteth by his power” – that is, He puts those in authority by His own power, not because of who they are or because of their power.

1 Samuel 2:7-8

⁷ The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up.

⁸ He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, and he hath set the world upon them.

Luke 1:52

⁵² He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.

Romans 13:1

¹ Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

C. Vs. 23-25 – the sovereign will of God is seen everywhere, and it is the believer's

duty to point that out and glorify Him because of it.

III. HIS GREATNESS – 36:26-37:24

A. Everything God does is done to show His greatness.

B. These verses are pointing to one particular aspect of creation to show the greatness of God, and that is the aspect of weather – we may be able to explain it, scientifically, but that doesn't make it any less amazing.

Psalm 19:1-6

¹ The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.

² Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.

³ There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.

⁴ Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun,

⁵ Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.

⁶ His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

1. Greatness in the rain and the storms – 36:26-37:5

a) Most of this is fairly straightforward truth about who God is and the greatness of His majesty.

- b) 36:26 states the basis of what follows – even if we understand all that can be known scientifically about the weather and the climate, we will never know all there is to know of the God who created it all.
- c) 36:27-28 – gives the basic principles of rain development and its purpose – “distil [drop down] upon man abundantly [upon the multitude of man]” – the point is not the rain is in abundance but that when it rains it rains on all who are under it, with no consideration of who they are.

Matthew 5:45

45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

- d) 36:29 – Rhetorical question presented here by Elihu, which demonstrates his emphasis on the greatness of God.

(1) *"The spreadings of the clouds" – although the word for "cloud" (עָב) is singular, it is used in a plural way for "cloud mass." The word used here is one that is used for thick, dense, dark clouds that would be seen in a time of storms.*

(2) *"The noise of his tabernacle" – "Noise" (הַשָּׁמַיִם) – a storm, a crashing, the sound of thunder; "tabernacle" (מִשְׁכָּנוֹ) – a covering, a booth, a canopy. To be understood as, "The fearful thunderings of his tent" (considering God dwells in the heavens).*

Psalm 18:11

¹¹ He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies.

"The sense here is, who can understand and explain the cause of thunder? The object of Elihu in this is, to show how great and incomprehensible is God, and nature furnishes few more impressive illustrations of this than the crash of thunder." (Barnes)

e) Vs. 30-33 give more description on the power of the storms that God creates.

(1) The first part of verse 30 is speaking of lightning as being "his [God's] light," and what a spectacular light show it is as He spreads it out over the whole of the sky that can be seen, many times. The second part is a bit more ambiguous, or unclear, but, keeping within the context of the first clause of the line in the stanza of this verse, it seems to be speaking of how the light from a lightning bolt can penetrate deep into the waters themselves – again demonstrating the power of God's creation.

(2) Verse 31 alludes to God's use of the climate to deal out judgment upon his subjects (mankind and creation), both good and bad judgment. He has, and, to some extent, continues to use (or allowed to be used) the weather as a means to demonstrate His greatness. In the reference to "meat in abundance," Elihu uses a word for "meat" (אֶכְלָה) that is in God's judgment, He will provide food for both man and

animals.

(3) Verse 33 is one of those verses in Job that doesn't translate well into English. In fact, according to one source (the notes for the verse on <https://netbible.org/bible/Job+36>), there are over 30 known interpretations of this verse from scholars. We will stick to the way most conservative scholars view it.

(a) The first hemistich (first half of a line of verse) contains only three Hebrew words - נְגִיד עֲלִיו רָעוּ - and in as literal interpretation as can be given to make sense in English would read something like, "Its loud noise (or his thunder) shall proclaim concerning him." The word for "noise" refers to the sound and action of shouting (Zodhiates), which gives a human characteristic (anthropomorphism) to something God does - thunder being His shout.

(b) The second hemistich is even more difficult - made up of four Hebrew words - אַף עַל-עוֹלָה, מִקְנֵה - the problem is in the use of the word for "cattle." Some good scholars have this as a completely different word pointing to his anger rising up (which is the way the Geneva Bible has it, as well as Young's Literal Translation). The problem is in seeing an entirely different Hebrew word in the manuscripts. Given the context, either would be valid, but the one in most good translations of the English Bible attribute the idea of "cattle" here. So, "The cattle also concerning the vapour" - "that is,

the cattle likewise show signs of rain, being sensible of the vapours which rise up out of the earth, and are drawn up into the air and form clouds there; these, through their sharp sight, discern the vapours rising out of the earth insensible by men..." (Gill).

The point Elihu seems to be making here is that all of creation, even the animals, know who God is and can sense His nearness even in the thunder and rain.

- f) 37:1-5 seem to expound on verse 33 of the previous stanza, going into more detail on the demonstration of God's power in creation. He concludes this part with the words in the end of verse five – "great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend." No truer words could be spoken, and Elihu seems to know that.

2. Greatness in the snow and cold – 37:6-13

- a) Vs. 6-10 speak of the impact cold and snow have on both man and animal.

(1) Vs. 6 – God sends both the snow, and the gentle rain and the heavier rain ("the great rain of his strength"), as He sees fit.

(2) Vs. 7 is another difficultly worded verse but not as difficult as 36:33. "He sealet up the hand of all men that they cannot, on account of the cold out of doors, be opened for work, that all of His work [creation] may come to the perception (of Him who doeth all things)" (K&D). Elihu seems to be

saying to Job that all of creation knows who God is, and sees His handiwork, and He makes sure of this when He sends the cold and the snow to prevent them from doing anything but meditating or contemplating creation. This is for Job's benefit so that he would see that God is greater than he is (as if Job needed reminding of this).

(3) Vs. 8 – even the animals know to stay out of the cold and "remain in their places" (which, coincidentally, is a term we've become familiar with during this pandemic – showing that God does, in fact, allow circumstances for us to do just that so that we have time to "consider Him").

(4) Vs. 9-10 are simply more observations on the weather by Elihu. Vs. 10 refers to the "waters" as being "straitened" – קְמוּצָק – uncommon word that is pointing to the waters, when they are "compressed" by cold will freeze and become solid, or "straitened."

b) Vs. 11-13 speaks of the rains again (possible speaking of the torrential rains that come in various parts of the earth that may bring destruction at times but also replenish what we know of as "aquifers" that lie deep under the surface of the earth. Vs. 13 is the key, in part, to why God allows severe storms to come.

(1) "Whether for correction" – there have been times in history past, and most likely still are, to some degree, that God has allowed (or directly used) severe weather to correct His creation – be it man, animal, vegetation, or all of them.

The word for "correction" – נִשְׁבֵּט – is one that means "rod," and is seen as the "rod of correction" in other parts of the Old Testament. It's not just God judging mankind with weather, it is to use His judgment for the purpose of affecting a change in what is His.

(2) "Or for his land" – to render the land productive that had not been previously.

(3) "Or for mercy" – giving rain simply to show He is merciful to people that do not deserve it, perhaps.

3. Greatness in the warmth and the dry – 37:14-24

a) Vs. 14-20 - This section begins with Elihu going back to addressing Job by name and directly, and shows Elihu once again mocking Job, thinking Job was so self-righteous that he was better than (or, at least on the same level) as God.

(1) Vs. 17 brings the warmth of the summer sun into view in this section, and the south wind bringing heat.

(2) Vs. 18 is another one of those puzzling verses. It speaks of the sky being "strong, and as a molten looking glass."

(a) "Strong" – firm, compact – seems Elihu might have thought the sky was solid, or at least that's the analogy to which he alludes.

(b) The word "and" is supplied by the translators – the Hebrew would read "strong [firm] as a molten looking

glass.”

- (c) “Molten” – מִצֵּק – poured out or cast (hence, molten)
 - (d) “Looking glass” – mirror, made of a plate of metal highly polished. Comes from a root word meaning “to see” with an ending referencing oneself (פְּרָאִי).
 - (e) “There can be no doubt that the early apprehension in regard to the sky was, that it was a solid expanse, and that it is often so spoken of in the Bible. There is, however, no direct declaration that it is so, and whenever it is so spoken of, it is to be understood as popular language, as we speak still of the rising or setting of the sun, though we know that the language is not philosophically correct. The design of the Bible is not to teach science, but religion, and the speakers in the Bible were allowed to use the language of common life - just as scientific men in fact do now.” (Barnes)
- b) Vs. 19-20 finds Elihu back to mocking Job, bringing up again how he thought Job was demonstrating arrogance in seeking God’s purpose as he did in the earlier discourses. He’s saying to Job, “If you’re so smart, and so close to God, and to being God-like, teach us what to say to Him, how to reach Him, since we are in the dark on how to do that.” Even though Elihu is apparently mocking Job, he does demonstrate an important truth about how feeble we are in reaching the Lord without a mediator – and of course we know that that mediator is the

person of God the Son, Jesus Christ.

- c) Vs. 21-22 return to the demonstration of God's greatness in creation.
- d) Vs. 23 gives us a tremendous truth about the God we say we serve. If you were to remove the italicized words (in the KJV anyways) and just read the words that are translated out of the Hebrew without the inserted words by the translators, this verse would read something like:

The Almighty! We cannot find him out!
Excellent in power, and justice, and
abundant righteousness!

This is the main emphasis of the argument that Elihu has been making both for God and against Job. His point is that, because of the awesomeness of God, and the truth that created man cannot understand the depths of who He is, then it would stand to reason that Job's sufferings must come from his self-righteous piousness in thinking God didn't have justification for what Job was going through.

- e) Vs. 24 is a fitting conclusion to this discourse for Elihu – he confronts Job with a final remark and declares something about the greatness of God.

Conclusion: Have we beheld God? Have we recognized God for who He is? He is "mighty," He "exalteth power," and He "is great" – what a God we serve!!