

## **Day 72 - MONDAY: January 16th**

Job 36 – 37

Job 36:1-33 NKJV

Elihu also proceeded and said: "Bear with me a little, and I will show you That there are yet words to speak on God's behalf. I will fetch my knowledge from afar; I will ascribe righteousness to my Maker. For truly my words are not false; One who is perfect in knowledge is with you. "Behold, God is mighty, but despises no one; He is mighty in strength of understanding. He does not preserve the life of the wicked, But gives justice to the oppressed. He does not withdraw His eyes from the righteous; But they are on the throne with kings, For He has seated them forever, And they are exalted. And if they are bound in fetters, Held in the cords of affliction, Then He tells them their work and their transgressions— That they have acted defiantly. He also opens their ear to instruction, And commands that they turn from iniquity. If they obey and serve Him, They shall spend their days in prosperity, And their years in pleasures. But if they do not obey, They shall perish by the sword, And they shall die without knowledge. "But the hypocrites in heart store up wrath; They do not cry for help when He binds them. They die in youth, And their life ends among the perverted persons. He delivers the poor in their affliction, And opens their ears in oppression. "Indeed He would have brought you out of dire distress, Into a broad place where there is no restraint; And what is set on your table would be full of richness. But you are filled with the judgment due the wicked; Judgment and justice take hold of you. Because there is wrath, beware lest He take you away with one blow; For a large ransom would not

help you avoid it. Will your riches, Or all the mighty forces, Keep you from distress? Do not desire the night, When people are cut off in their place. Take heed, do not turn to iniquity, For you have chosen this rather than affliction. "Behold, God is exalted by His power; Who teaches like Him? Who has assigned Him His way, Or who has said, 'You have done wrong'? "Remember to magnify His work, Of which men have sung. Everyone has seen it; Man looks on it from afar. "Behold, God is great, and we do not know Him; Nor can the number of His years be discovered. For He draws up drops of water, Which distill as rain from the mist, Which the clouds drop down And pour abundantly on man. Indeed, can anyone understand the spreading of clouds, The thunder from His canopy? Look, He scatters His light upon it, And covers the depths of the sea. For by these He judges the peoples; He gives food in abundance. He covers His hands with lightning, And commands it to strike. His thunder declares it, The cattle also, concerning the rising storm.

Job 37:1-24 NKJV

"At this also my heart trembles, And leaps from its place. Hear attentively the thunder of His voice, And the rumbling that comes from His mouth. He sends it forth under the whole heaven, His lightning to the ends of the earth. After it a voice roars; He thunders with His majestic voice, And He does not restrain them when His voice is heard. God thunders marvelously with His voice; He does great things which we cannot comprehend. For He says to the snow, 'Fall on the earth'; Likewise to the gentle rain and the heavy rain of His strength. He seals the hand of every man, That all men may know His work. The beasts go into dens, And remain in their lairs. From

the chamber of the south comes the whirlwind, And cold from the scattering winds of the north. By the breath of God ice is given, And the broad waters are frozen. Also with moisture He saturates the thick clouds; He scatters His bright clouds. And they swirl about, being turned by His guidance, That they may do whatever He commands them On the face of the whole earth. He causes it to come, Whether for correction, Or for His land, Or for mercy. "Listen to this, O Job; Stand still and consider the wondrous works of God. Do you know when God dispatches them, And causes the light of His cloud to shine? Do you know how the clouds are balanced, Those wondrous works of Him who is perfect in knowledge? Why are your garments hot, When He quiets the earth by the south wind? With Him, have you spread out the skies, Strong as a cast metal mirror? "Teach us what we should say to Him, For we can prepare nothing because of the darkness. Should He be told that I wish to speak? If a man were to speak, surely he would be swallowed up. Even now men cannot look at the light when it is bright in the skies, When the wind has passed and cleared them. He comes from the north as golden splendor; With God is awesome majesty. As for the Almighty, we cannot find Him; He is excellent in power, In judgment and abundant justice; He does not oppress. Therefore men fear Him; He shows no partiality to any who are wise of heart."

### **Daily Deep Dive:**

Here is the UCG writeup for both chapters 36 & 37: "Chapters 36 and 37 record Elihu's last address. He begins by further defending God's justice and ends by proclaiming God's majesty. In his defense of God (compare Job 36:2), Elihu says he obtains his knowledge from afar

(verse 3)—that is, apparently, from God Himself and, as the latter part of the discourse illustrates, from the majesty of God's creation (compare verses 24-25).

The end of verse 4 may sound like the height of conceit on the part of Elihu—that he is claiming to be perfect in knowledge. While some interpret this as meaning eloquent of speech, that seems a needless point to make here—and it is not a literal rendering. Far more likely is that the statement "One who is perfect in knowledge is with you" refers to God. After all, Elihu later in the same speech clearly describes God as "Him who is perfect in knowledge" (Job 37:16). Moreover, the statement at the end of Job 36:4 parallels the next verse, which says that God is mighty in strength of understanding.

In verses 6-7, Elihu turns again to the idea of retribution and reward. But he is here speaking in an ultimate sense. In contrast to the NKJV translation of verse 6, God does indeed preserve the life of even the wicked for the time being. The word translated "does not preserve" should in context be understood as "does not (or will not) grant," in contrast to God's granting justice later in the verse. The tense in verses 6-7 and 9-10 is open, meaning that it can be either present or future (see *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, footnote on verse 6). Since the reign of the all the righteous in verse 7 is yet future, a better translation of verses 6-7 would seem to be: "He will not [ultimately] grant life to the wicked, but will give justice to the oppressed. He will not withdraw His eyes from the righteous; but they will be kings on the throne, for He will cause them to sit forever, and they will be exalted."

Job certainly knows this but it has diminished as his focus. His mind has been consumed with why it is wrong for him to suffer as he now does. Elihu then explains that if people are afflicted, God will reveal why, making known to them their sins (if that is the cause) and what they need to do to get right with Him. If they submit to Him, their lives will

be blessed. But if not, they will perish. Again, Elihu seems to be viewing this in an ultimate sense—or at least as a general principle for life. Those who will humble themselves before God in their affliction will be delivered (Job 36:15).

Verse 16-17 in the NKJV seem to contain a very harsh judgment from Elihu—that God would have delivered Job but he is being judged for his wickedness. This would appear to make Elihu have the same basic perspective as Job's three friends. But verse 16 is better in the New International Version. Elihu tells Job: "He [God] is wooing you [present tense] from the jaws of distress to a spacious place free from restriction, to the comfort of your table laden with choice food." That is, Elihu seems to think that his words are God's way of communicating to Job. And this does appear to be the case, at least to some degree.

Verses 17-20 may appear to make Elihu even more off base, thinking Job wicked and that he has been reliant on wealth and power. But these particular verses, as *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* explains, are some of the hardest to translate in the entire Old Testament (note on verses 15-21). The same commentary offers the following variant translation, wherein Elihu seems to be preparing Job for the outlook he should have when the trial is over: "Since you have had your fill of judgment due the wicked, since judgment and justice have taken hold (of you), beware that no one entice you to want riches again. Do not let the great price you are paying mislead you. Of what value was your wealth apart from affliction? And of what value are all your mighty efforts? Do not long for the night, when peoples will vanish from their place [i.e., the time of God's judgment]. Beware of turning to evil, for that is why you are tested by affliction." These are some of the lessons Job needs to walk away with. As Elihu says of God in the next verse, "Who teaches like Him?" (verse 22).

Of course, Elihu doesn't claim to know all the reasons Job is being tried. But he next turns to what is vital in all trials. Rather than accuse God of wrong (see verse 23), Elihu tells Job: "Remember to magnify His work" (verse 24). And Elihu then proceeds to do just that through the remainder of his speech, extolling God's mighty works in creation. This is the right approach, for it is even what God Himself will present to Job in His speeches (chapters 38-41).

Note that the NKJV translation of Job 36:26 says that we do not know God. Yet the word "Him" is in italics, meaning it has been added to the text. A more appropriate insertion here might be the "it" from the previous verse, referring to God's *work*. So verse 26 could be rendered, "Behold, God is great, and we do not know His work." That is, we can't know all that He is doing—it is beyond us. Elihu reaffirms this in Job 37:5: "He does great things which we cannot comprehend." Job himself actually touched on this theme before, but his point was to show his friends that they were foolish for thinking that they had God all figured out. What Job needed to do was reflect on God's creation as proof that God is infinitely wise—that He knows exactly what He is doing in all circumstances even when *we* don't.

As his first illustration of God's unfathomable wisdom in creation, Elihu presents the hydrological cycle of evaporation, cloud formation and rain. *Expositor's* comments: "Rain in the O[ld] T[estament] world was considered one of the most needed and obvious blessings of God. The phenomenon of condensation (v. 27b) and precipitation (v. 28), while not technically understood, was certainly observable. But evaporation (v. 27) is not. [One commentator] therefore considered this proof that the Elihu speeches came a few centuries later than the divine speeches since such meteorological knowledge would have been obtained from the Greeks.... Elihu did not need a knowledge of physics since God is the one who does this (an idea even we who know the physics can still

affirm), but he may have known more about the phenomenon [in his ancient context] than [some commentators are] willing to admit" (note on verses 27-33). Perhaps God inspired him.

In verse 29 Elihu mentions the spreading of clouds and thunder from God's canopy, paralleling the mention of God's canopy of dark clouds in Psalms 18:11 in describing the coming of God. Note also the next verse in Job 36: "*Look, He scatters His light upon it...*" (verse 30). It seems from what follows that Elihu is mostly describing presently observable phenomena. We see here the thunder and lightning of a coming storm (Job 36:29-37:5), the thunder causing Elihu's heart to pound (Job 37:1). A whirlwind, perhaps a massive tornado, is coming (verse 9). Ice forms, possibly describing hail (verse 10). The clouds are swirling yet there is brightness within them (verses 11, 15, 22). As the next chapter will show, Almighty God will at last answer Job out of this whirlwind.

We can envision the scene. As Elihu points toward the menacing clouds, the thunder is getting louder. The howling wind is growing stronger. Elihu must raise his voice to be heard. He argues that God is in command of the clouds (verse 12). He says that God sends such storms for various reasons—whether to correct people, to nourish the land, or to mercifully provide for people (verse 13). In this he seems to also be making a metaphor out of the storm—referring to the storms of life, which God directs and that are ultimately for people's own good. Job had used a similar metaphor when he accused God of crushing him with a tempest (Job 9:17). But he was mistaken. He could not fully understand God's motivations in his trial just as he could not understand the present actual thunderstorm—or *any* storm for that matter. As the gusts build, sweeping up debris and causing people and structures to sway, thunder booms and the oncoming tornado rages louder still. "Listen to this, O Job!" Elihu cries out. "Stand still and consider the

wondrous works of God!" (see verse 14). He then challenges Job to explain how God is doing all this (verses 15-16). The Almighty acts beyond human comprehension. Who are we to instruct *Him*? Job's concept of contending with God in court is thereby shown to be absurd (verses 19-20).

Elihu's conclusion? God is awesome, beyond understanding, omnipotent and perfectly just and righteous (verses 22-23). He is not an oppressor, as Job has implied (verse 23). Rather, the trials He brings are, in His omniscience, intended for good. Therefore men should show God the reverence due Him—and that includes Job. This is appropriate instruction in any trial and throughout life. It is why Jesus instructed us to begin our prayers extolling God's name and to finish them praising His immortal power and glory (Matthew 6:9, Matthew 6:13). If this remains our focus, we will have greater confidence in the fact that God is working out what is best for us and that, come what may, He will see us through." [END]