

## **Explaining And Defending God**

### **Job 34:1-37**

#### **Introduction**

This is Elihu's second speech.

"Elihu felt Job had lied about his innocence. He strived to defend God based on an inaccurate knowledge of Job's situation—which started with his dispute in heaven and not with his own gross sin" (see The Moody Bible Commentary; 2014 edition; p.732).

Elihu thinks he speaks for God. Elihu thinks he is expelling and representing and defending God.

A.W. Tozer wrote; "The essence of idolatry is the entertainment of thoughts about God that are unworthy of Him."

What kind of God is God? Augustine said; "What, then, is the God I worship? . . . You are the most hidden from us and yet the most present among us, the most beautiful and yet the most strong, every enduring; and yet we cannot comprehend you."

Elihu's speech is intricate, detailed, nuanced. David L. McKenna suggests that analytical minds will savor the process but the philosophical minded will continue to ask the question; "why are you saying that? What is your point? What is your purpose? (The Communicator's Commentary; Job; p.245).

#### **Elihu's Charge Against Job (vv.1-9)**

*Job 34:1–37 (NKJV) Elihu further answered and said: 2 "Hear my words, you wise men; Give ear to me, you who have knowledge.*

Elihu promised "no flattery" and then repeatedly calls Job's friends "wise men". We also get the impression that Elihu wonders whether or not he is holding his audience. He repeated says "give ear" or listen carefully (see 33:1; 31, 33; 34:2, 10, 16).

*3 For the ear tests words As the palate tastes food.*

We listen with our ears. We taste with our mouth. The discerning palate can recognize and differentiate between fruit and the worm in the fruit. Do you know what's more troubling than finding a worm in your apple? Finding half a worm in your apple!

Elihu invites us to listen with 'the inner ear' of reason (David L. McKenna; p.244).

*4 Let us choose justice for ourselves; Let us know among ourselves what is good.*

*5 "For Job has said, 'I am righteous, But God has taken away my justice;*

One of the major themes of the book of Job is the justice of God. Job felt like he was being treated unfairly; unjustly! That he was being treated not like a righteous man—but rather like a person who was cursed. Job felt like he was being treated like a guilty man; and was their some kind of court—some way to appeal to God's judgment? In one sense Job did feel like he was

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accused of doing something wrong; but for the life of him he couldn't figure out what exactly he had done wrong!

*6Should I lie concerning my right? My wound is incurable, though I am without transgression.'*

*7What man is like Job, Who drinks scorn like water,*

One translation; "Who drinks derision like water".

What man is like Job? Once again we are left with the text. Do you remember Satan's challenge? Does Job fear God for nothing?" Job's wife said, "Curse God and die". If Job said what Elihu—says—Job said—the test is over—Satan has won.

*8Who goes in company with the workers of iniquity, And walks with wicked men?*

*9For he has said, 'It profits a man nothing That he should delight in God.'*

What good does it do to follow God if you do everything right and still suffer?

Elihu is reproving Job for making the claim that it does no good to know or follow or delight in the Lord or that no tangible benefit comes from knowing and serving the Lord.

### **Elihu's Claim For God: He Is Just And Fair (vv.10-30)**

*10"Therefore listen to me, you men of understanding: Far be it from God to do wickedness, And from the Almighty to commit iniquity.*

Elihu makes the repeated request "listen to me" and speaks to the three friends of Job (the men of understanding).

God cannot pervert justice. God is incapable of wickedness. God is just in the way he deals with mankind.

"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen.18:25).

I am asked all the time; "what about the people who have never heard of Jesus?" Is it fair that God would send them to hell?" The fact that the question is asked does more than hint that God might be unfair or unjust. Is He?

According to Elihu—what seems like injustice is really justice (see Wiersbe p. 122). Wiersbe says "God is paying sinners back for what they do (Job 34:11). In fact, God is so just that He has ordained that sin itself will punish the evildoer (see Pss. 7:15; 9:15-16; 35:8). There is no way to escape the justice of God" (Wiersbe *BE Patient*; pp. 132-133).

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*11For He repays man according to his work, And makes man to find a reward according to his way.*

Elihu argues that God is impartial.

Elihu's arguments go something like this; God does not pervert justice (v.10); but rather he is just; impartial (v.11); impervious to criticism—because He answers to no one; because of his sovereign authority over all the earth (vv.12-13); He is the author of life; he can sustain life or will not to sustain life as He determines (vv.14-15).

*12Surely God will never do wickedly, Nor will the Almighty pervert justice.*

*13Who gave Him charge over the earth? Or who appointed Him over the whole world?*

Who picked God to be in charge? The question seems absurd. God was not appointed to His throne! God does not hold office at the whim of the angels or will of humanity.

To suggest that God is unkind or unfair or unjust is to suggest that He has no right to reign.

But God is sovereign! The book of Job magnifies the sovereignty of God! From the first chapter to the last chapter God is in control!

Satan is told what he can and cannot do. All the times Job feels God is distant, or absent, He is there! He is aware of Job's circumstances and feelings; he is aware of every unkind or ill-informed judgment made against Job. God is called "Almighty" some 31 times in the book!

*14If He should set His heart on it, If He should gather to Himself His Spirit and His breath,*

*15All flesh would perish together, And man would return to dust.*

Is God in charge of our very existence? The Bible teaches that God gives our breath and take our lives in an instant (vv.14-15; Acts 17:25, 28). "It is because of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not" (Lam.3:22).

*16"If you have understanding, hear this; Listen to the sound of my words:*

The audience shifts; the passage switches from the plural (Job's friends) to the singular (Job).

The substance of Elihu's first argument is that God must be just otherwise He (God) would not be God. His second argument has at its core—the contention that if God were unjust there could be no just government on earth (vv.16-20).

*17Should one who hates justice govern? Will you condemn Him who is most just?*

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What a great question! How can someone govern if they hate justice? Job was a respected local official. Job helped bring justice to the afflicted (29:7-17).

We know that human government is ordained and established by God (Gen.9; Rom.13).

Are human beings charged with establishing and promoting justice in our communities? The answer seems to be yes. Is it such a stretch to believe that if imperfect human beings can strive towards some sense of justice on earth; that a perfect God executes perfect justice in heaven?

In the book of Genesis and Daniel and God raises up rulers; and casts them down.

Clearly Elihu is correct about God's justice. Elihu's great mistake was to affirm God's justice but neglect God's attributes of love, and mercy and compassion and patience and kindness. God is full of grace and love and graciousness.

God devised a plan of redemption that would provide justice for sin—and satisfy is own holy nature; and at the same time satisfy His deep love and compassion for His children in rebellion!

*18Is it fitting to say to a king, 'You are worthless,' And to nobles, 'You are wicked'?*

*19Yet 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.*

*20In 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.*

*21"For His eyes are on the ways of man, And He sees all his steps.*

Let's recap: Elihu's first argument; God cannot be wicked or unjust because He is God; second God must be just otherwise just government on the earth would be impossible; and now God must be just—because if he were unjust he would not see what is going on in the earth and in the heart of human beings. His eyes are on the ways of man. And He sees all his steps.

For the person who believe that God is the great designer and Creator of the universe who winds up His universe and then walks away—the Bible says no!

A human judge a sinful—finite judge—cannot know all things. God sees all.

*22There is no darkness nor shadow of death Where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.*

*23For He need not further consider a man, That he should go before God in judgment.*

What could Job tell God than He didn't already know? What new facts or evidence or explanation would cause God to change His mind? God never calls men forward for further examination. Unlike human lawyers or human courts or human judges—God has no need to gather further evidence; investigate further claims; make further inquiries; He knows everything. He judges in perfect wisdom.

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*24He breaks in pieces mighty men without inquiry, And sets others in their place.*

*25Therefore He knows their works; He overthrows them in the night, And they are crushed.*

*26He strikes them as wicked men In the open sight of others,*

*27Because they turned back from Him, And would not consider any of His ways,*

God is just and fair. God does no evil (vv.10-15). God shows no prejudice (vv.16-20). God exposes all evildoers and punishes them (vv.21-27). God hears the cries of the poor and needy (vv.28b-29).

*28So that they caused the cry of the poor to come to Him; For He hears the cry of the afflicted.*

*29When 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?—*

Job claimed God's silence was hastening his death! God was silent. God had hidden his face. Elihu's answer; "but if he (God) remains silent, who can condemn Him? (NIV).

In Job 24 the hint was given by Job that God had passed over men's sins; ignored men's sins—but what right had Job to judge the Judge?

Wiersbe points out that God waited four centuries before judging the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. God deferred the catastrophic flood for 120 years.

Sinners ought to wake up amazed every day that they have one more moment to repent (2 Peter 3:9)!

God rules over the individual and over the nations! But God is not responsible for man's sin! God cannot be charged with society's evils! God has given real human beings real choice! They are free to sin—and free to turn from their sin and trust God and His Savior and His Gospel.

*30That the hypocrite should not reign, Lest the people be ensnared.*

### **Elihu's Correction To Job: Repent And Return To God (vv.31-37)**

*31“For has anyone said to God, ‘I have borne chastening; I will offend no more;*

*32Teach me what I do not see; If I have done iniquity, I will do no more’?*

*33Should He repay it according to your terms, Just because you disavow it? You must choose, and not I; Therefore speak what you know.*

Ask God to teach you what you don't know! And promise God not to sin like this again!

Elihu pauses—and invites Job to respond. He does not.

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34“Men of understanding say to me, Wise men who listen to me:  
35‘Job speaks without knowledge, His words are without wisdom.’

36Oh, that Job were tried to the utmost, Because his answers are like those of wicked men!

Elihu invites more testing! Can you imagine? Egging on Satan? Encouraging Satan that perhaps one more trial, one more test, one more tragedy will bring Job into submission and compliance? What will make Job come to his senses?

37For he adds rebellion to his sin; He claps his hands among us, And multiplies his words against God.”

In modern times we clap approval. But in Job’s day it was a gesture of mockery and contempt (Wiersbe p.135; and cites Job 27:23; Lam.2:15).

What are Elihu’s charges against Job?

You expected God to answer your foolish and defiant demands;  
You foolishly refuse to repent  
You foolishly refuse to listen to the counsel of your three (now four) wise friends  
You have spoken without knowledge or wisdom  
You have replied to your friends questions like a wicked person.

Ouch!

### Conclusion

**Do we dare speak of retribution without redemption? Do we dare speak of redemption without retribution?**

In the end Elihu wants to defend God’s justice and condemn Job as a sinner.

He puts forth a different argument but comes to the same conclusion as the other so called friends!

Does the justice of God lie in the nature of God? I think the answer is yes. Is Elihu right when he argues the very existence of human beings and their continued existence points to the fact that God is just? I think the answer is yes. If God willed—he could call back His Spirit and everyone would drop dead. His creation denies Him and rejects Him. Elihu argues that God is impartial; dealing with rich and poor; prince and pauper the same. Elihu argues that God has

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perfect knowledge and therefore can render perfect justice. Elihu invites Job and all to ask God to teach them what they cannot see.

Elihu suggests that Job speaks without knowledge, without wisdom—but all that seems contrary to Job’s character.

Job you are stupid. This can be fixed—cured by teaching. Job you claim to be innocent—when in fact you are guilty—and this can be fixed by confessing your sin—and Job is accused of sedition—Elihu believes Job has falsely claimed God has wronged him—that Job has denied that God is just—a blatant act of rebellion (v.37).

What is Elihu’s goal? Is it to vindicate God and condemn Job?

Is it always wrong—arrogant—defiant—to question the Lord? How do we keep our selves—and our heart—humble—so that we can understand, obey, and please the Lord?

When is it a good idea to challenge the Lord, question the Lord, accuse the Lord of wrongdoing?

Hebrews 2:1-3; “Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. (2) For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, (3) how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him” (4) God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?”