

## **Elihu's Explanations**

### **Job 37:1-24**

#### **Introduction**

Elihu's monologue began in chapter 32. In his speech to Job he denounces Job for his claim of innocence and his friends for their failure to answer Job well. He argues that God does not make unfair judgments and in the end believes Job is arrogant in his claim of personal innocence and righteousness. Elihu believes that God responds to us in wisdom and fairness; and condemns Job for calling into question God's fairness. Elihu concludes his speech with a powerful and poetic declaration of God's might and majesty and his faithfulness to the righteous. In chapter 34-35 Elihu declares that God is just and in chapter 36-37 that God is great.

Elihu may have been wrong about Job; but he was right about God's power, majesty, omnipotence and magnificence. Does nature reveal God's majesty? The answer is yes. Elihu understands that the concepts of greatness, holiness, righteousness, justice, all proceed from a great and holy and righteous and just God. If there is such a thing as truth (and there is) God is the source of truth.

In one sense Elihu's message is that if the God of Creation is big enough to create and care about His creation; he is big enough to care about you. If God is great and able to reconcile and resolve the mysteries and mechanics of the universe; he is big enough to resolve the mysteries and inconsistencies of human behavior. God is big enough to care about your problems and wise enough to resolve them.

In the last chapter Elihu said, "Behold, God is great, and we know Him not" (36:26) or we don't know Him as we should. Elihu looks at the work of God in nature and notices that God is in control all year around in autumn (36:27-37:5); in winter (37:6-10); in spring (vv.11-13) and summer (vv.14-18). Elihu is in fact a Creation scientist. He asks Job three rhetorical (or maybe not) questions; about the clouds, the lightning, the wind and rainless skies—and says "Can you explain these things?" You might say "we can now". Elihu then asks can you control these things? You might say—not now—but in the not too distant future human beings may be able to even harness the weather! In the end Elihu challenges Job and says—if you cannot give answers to the everyday events of nature how will you ever be able to make a case before God or defend yourself before God? Elihu warns Job that mere men cannot look very long into the sun without burning their eyes! What will happen when we meet God face to face?

Some scholars speculate that perhaps Elihu's speech was cut short by a very real storm that was fast approaching Job—his friends and Elihu. Could Elihu see the storm off in the distance? Did Elihu have any idea that God was in fact in that storm and was about to speak? Job was about to get—what he longed for—a meeting with God—an appointment with God—an audience with God. Will Job be ready? Will any of us be ready?

#### **God In Control Of The Autumn Storm (vv.1-5)**

*Job 37:1–24 (NKJV) 1 "At this also my heart trembles, And leaps from its place.*

*2Hear attentively the thunder of His voice, And the rumbling that comes from His mouth.*

The expression 'hear attentively' is an appeal for Job and others to continue to listen. Elihu considers the shock and awe of the mighty power of God.

*3He sends it forth under the whole heaven, His lightning to the ends of the earth.*

*4After it a voice roars; He thunders with His majestic voice, And He does not restrain them when His voice is heard.*

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It's almost impossible to ignore the roar of a lion.

*5God thunders marvelously with His voice; He does great things which we cannot comprehend.*

Elihu hears 'the rolling thunder' and sings "My God How Great Thou Art"! The sky darkens, the clouds gather, the lightning flashes and thunder roars! The trash heap becomes an outdoor lab! Was the rain falling right at that very moment? In the ancient world weather could generate fear and wonder

The Lord is the Lord God—the Creator of Heaven and Earth. Elihu allows the flash and thunder to illustrate his sermon; the rumble and roar (v.4); snow (v.6); gentle rain (v.6); heavy rain (v.6); the whirlwind (v.9); cold wind (v.9); ice (v.10); thick clouds (v.11); bright clouds (v.11); Elihu believes they do what ever God tells them to do!

The Lord is the one who established the laws of nature. The Lord is the one who established the seasons and the cycles that make cloud formation and rain. In Job's day the presence of clouds and the presence of rain was a bit of a mystery. How do clouds form? Why does it rain? Where does thunder come from? Who brings the rain? Elihu hints at the water cycle of nature; evaporation, condensation, precipitation—and the need for electricity (lightening) to make the system work (see Wiersbe p. 139).

To Elihu—lightening is a weapon of God and thunder is the voice of God. The autumn rain gives way to the winter ice and snow.

### **God in Control Of The Winter Storm (vv.6-10)**

*6For He says to the snow, 'Fall on the earth'; Likewise to the gentle rain and the heavy rain of His strength.*

God speaks and the snow falls. God speaks—in the Bible—and light shines; the universe exists, the earth is established; and life begins. God establishes the sun, the moon, the stars, the seasons.

*7He seals the hand of every man, That all men may know His work.*

God uses winter storms—and human effort ceases, human work often comes to a standstill. The Lord can make human labor impossible. At that point people reflect on God's work. A storm can paralyze a city, close airports, restrict travel, shut down business.

*8The beasts go into dens, And remain in their lairs.*

Animals retreat to their winter homes.

*9From the chamber of the south comes the whirlwind, And cold from the scattering winds of the north.*

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Elihu imagines a place where God keeps the wind—until it is time to blow.

*10By the breath of God ice is given, And the broad waters are frozen.*

In poetic language Elihu envisions God as blowing on the surface of the waters and ice is formed; we might think it terms of God causing the waters to freeze; we are to express our admiration and amazement; because God is in control.

What weather channel calls climatology and meteorology Elihu calls the miracle work of Almighty God. James Taylor sang “Winter, Spring Summer or Fall, all you have to do is call!”

Issac Watts;

I sing the goodness of the Lord  
That filled the earth with food;  
He formed the creatures with His word,  
And then pronounced them good.

There's not a plant or flower below  
But makes Thy glories known;  
And clouds arise and tempests blow  
By order from Thy throne.

### **God In Control Of The Spring Storm (vv.11-13)**

*11Also with moisture He saturates the thick clouds; He scatters His bright clouds.*

The bright clouds here may be a reference to clouds of lightening; that is you see those flashes of light in the clouds.

*12And they swirl about, being turned by His guidance, That they may do whatever He commands them On the face of the whole earth.*

The expression ‘His guidance’ may be a nautical term; literally ‘steerings’ or ‘rope-pullings’ (see Prov.1:5); God is the wise God—steering—pulling carefully charting the course for the clouds; God’s hand at the helm.

*13He causes it to come, Whether for correction, Or for His land, Or for mercy.*

Elihu believes that God creates the weather and controls the weather.

Elihu believes that God does what God does—in terms of punishment and reward.

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The hint—God may use suffering for either punishment or correction (or teaching)—for His land—that is—for the love of His land. And mercy—that is that God sends the rain—to rescue the land He loves. Mercy is something given—to reflect a covenant or an agreement—between friends. We are given a hint—that perhaps some test is involved—a test that Job may have provoked—but still no hint that Satan may have provoked the test.

Once again we restate the possibilities or reasons that Elihu offers—to explain Job's sufferings; perhaps to correct those who have gone astray; perhaps to rescue those whom God loves; perhaps to test the love and loyalty of one who has entered into a covenant relationship with God.

Does offering the explanation provide explanation? Not really. We still don't know.

### **A Final Appeal (vv.14-24)**

Remember Elihu believes that the Lord creates and controls the events of nature. Remember Elihu believes Job is guilty of unfairly accusing God of injustice; of punishing Job severely and unfairly. Elihu believes it is not wise—no—sinful to question the Lord who creates and sustains the world. The power of God and the judgments of God are beyond human understanding and therefore must be accepted by mere mortals who would dare question God. Elihu invites Job to fear God, and worship God.

Elihu invites Job to consider three questions:

1. Job—do you know why and how God guides the clouds and causes lightening to flash in the sky (v.15)?
2. Job—do you know how God hangs the clouds in mid air—and do you have perfect knowledge like God (v.16)?
3. Job—Can you spread out the skies on a hot day—when the humidity is so profound that your clothes are soaked and yet cause the skies to reflect that heat like a mirror (vv.17-18)?

*14“Listen to this, O Job; Stand still and consider the wondrous works of God.*

In the end—this is exactly what Job would do! It remains good advice for believers in every generation. “All believers need to be reminded that they are the work of the great power of God who, in His grace has chosen to bestow His love and favor on them” (Moody Bible Commentary p. 734).

In the book *Evolution in Light Of Scripture, Science, and Sense* (pp.43-45);

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Eels are among the most mysterious animals on earth. The prevailing scientific opinion is that all American and European eels lay their eggs under a mass of seaweed 1,500 feet deep in the Sargasso Sea (north-atlantic—sargasso—seaweed—just east of the continental USA). The pin-head size eggs hatch to release transparent, ribbonlike creatures with no eyes or mouths. Billions of these tiny, blind creatures are programmed to travel 1,000 to 3,000 miles across the ocean. They get into the Gulf Stream and are carried toward Europe or America. Traveling further north, they gradually lose their transparency and their eyes and mouths appear. The eels that are not eaten slowly develop hearts and stomachs. Next they swim up rivers and eat everything in sight, dead or alive. They gradually turn yellow and grow up to 3 feet long.

For the first five to eight years, eels are sexless, after which they develop both male and female organs. Once mature, their noses become pointy, they start back downstream, and their skin turns silvery. Apparently they never eat again because no silver eel has ever been found with food in its stomach. The eels swim thousands of miles to their birth place in the Sargasso Sea. At this time the eels either become male or a female as one of their sex organs shrivel up. Once they reproduce, the eels die. It is beyond comprehension to think of all of this could have somehow evolved by random mutational processes. God designed this complex sequence allowing eels to thrive in our fallen world” (see also *A Closer Look At The Evidence; for Dec. 9th*).

*15Do you know when God dispatches them, And causes the light of His cloud to shine?*

*16Do you know how the clouds are balanced, Those wondrous works of Him who is perfect in knowledge?*

*17Why are your garments hot, When He quiets the earth by the south wind?*

*18With Him, have you spread out the skies, Strong as a cast metal mirror?*

In the ancient world people would cast bronze and then polish it—with mirror surfaces.

*Elihu—do you know ‘when’ (v.15); ‘how’ (v.16); ‘why’ (v.17)—‘who’ (with him)(v.18). when, what, how, why, who—are all parts of reason and investigation.*

We must admit Elihu is a good speaker and excellent teacher.

The answers of course are no—I don’t know. I don’t know how God controls nature.

In this age of scientific enlightenment are there many things we understand? I think the answer is yes. Are there still things we don’t understand? The answer is yes.

*19“Teach us what we should say to Him, For we can prepare nothing because of the darkness.*

Now we see a bit of the role reversal. Job is invited to instruct Elihu and the others what to say to God! “For we can prepare nothing because of the darkness” (we don’t have a clue what to say). We are in darkness but that darkness would soon become light in Christ.

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The word 'prepare' is used as in the case of a legal brief; prepare a case; prepare an argument.

*20Should He be told that I wish to speak? If a man were to speak, surely he would be swallowed up.*

*21Even now men cannot look at the light when it is bright in the skies, When the wind has passed and cleared them.*

Has the storm passed? Has the sky cleared? Elihu tells us that the sky is clear, bright, calm!

*22He comes from the north as golden splendor; With God is awesome majesty.*

The Lord. . . who appears in His awesome splendor (golden splendor); In ancient times it was believed that God dwelt in the northern places;

Isaiah 14:13; "For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High'.

*23As for the Almighty, we cannot find Him; He is excellent in power, In judgment and abundant justice; He does not oppress.*

*"the Almighty is beyond our reach and exalted in power. . ."*

Scientists have been measuring the earth's magnetic field since 1835. Indirect measurements show that the overall strength of the earth's magnetic field has consistently decreased with time. It is the rate at which the earth's magnetic field is decreasing which is astounding—it has lost 50% of its strength in the last 1,400 years!

This is not a problem as long as the earth is relatively young, but if the earth is much older than 10,000 years, no life could have existed on earth because the magnetic field would have been so strong. If the earth is five billion years old, why is the magnetic field less than 10,000 years old? Could the earth be much younger than many of us have been led to believe? Observations of the rapid reversals of the earth's magnetic field are also a problem for scientists who believe in an earth of great age. Various observations have shown that in the past the earth's magnetic field has reversed over a short time period (days-months). Catastrophic upheavals in the earth's molten core during a worldwide flood can easily explain these rapid reversals. No other mechanism can adequately explain the short time period reported for these reversals. These magnetic field reversals would have caused an even more rapid decay of the total field strength—indicating a maximum possible age for the earth even less than 10,000 years (See Proc. of the 2nd International Conference of Creationism, "Physical Mechanism for reversals of the earth's magnetic field during the flood" Vol. II 1991).

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What will human beings do when they finally meet God? Will human beings be able to justify their thoughts, beliefs, actions, rebellion disobedience and short-comings?

How will a person who wants forgiveness and cleansing and salvation be able to plead their case apart from Christ, apart from the gospel, apart from grace?

If God is excellent in power and in judgment—and abundant justice—how can he exercise mercy for those who deserve His justice?

*24Therefore men fear Him; He shows no partiality to any who are wise of heart."*

The verse is difficult to translate. Francis Anderson translates the second line by taking the negative as an assertion rather than as a negation; 'surely all those who are wise of heart will fear Him!'"

In the Book *The Genesis Record* (p.74); argues that human beings are made in the image of God; and as image bearers have unique properties that no other animal shares; we experience emotion. Some may argue that animals experience emotion—but they are not able to reflect and consider and evaluate their emotion. Human beings experience creativity, moral consciousness, appreciation of beauty, ability to think abstractly, capacity to love and worship God—and the ability to articulate speech through symbols and use symbolic language. No animal shares these qualities.

Some moral psychologists argue that God is a fiction, a fabrication, an invention to explain what we don't know, to provide an answer when there is no answer. The argument is attractive to the wicked and the sinner. If there is no God—there is no one to answer to. It is clear that there are gods—who are the product of human imagination and wishful thinking.

But what about the God of the Bible?

### **Conclusion**

There is something interesting in Elihu's speech. He throws down the gauntlet; if you can't understand the everyday processes that make up our universe, our world, the cycles of life and weather, how in the world will you speak to God? You don't understand your world—let alone your God. You know He is great. You know He is just. You know that God does not afflict people for no good reason. Elihu says; "you should fear Him."

Modern Science is quick to pick up the gauntlet and say—"I can answer Elihu's questions. Natural processes explain all these questions and more. Science, physics, cosmology and astronomy are the tools that offer me explanations with no need for a god or gods; no need or a religion or religions; with no need for a Savior or saviors.

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Elihu spoke with self-assurance—with confidence—perhaps even a little bravado. Elihu offered rich insights both into the nature and character of God; the condition of man and the problem of suffering.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary offers this insight: “Job said nothing after Elihu’s speeches, possible because he saw some truth in what Elihu was saying. According to this youthful informant, God justice should not be questioned or His sovereignty challenged, because His ways are beyond human understanding. According to Elihu, calamities can serve to remove pride and to protect people from more grace difficulties. God, then is to be worshipped, not criticized; He is to be extolled, not examined. Elihu fittingly prepared the way for God to speak. He did so: (a) by defending God; (b) by sensitizing Job to his need for humility; (c) by describing God’s wonders in natural revelation, which God elaborated on; (d) by probing Job with thought-provoking questions (33:13; 34:17-19,33; 35:2, 6-7; 36:19, 22-23,29; 37:15-18,20) a tactic that God continued; and (e) by targeting Job’s basic problem—justifying himself and condemning God—which God himself later mentioned (cf. 32:2 with 40:8)” (See Walvoord and Zuck—pp. 765-766).

**Those who fear Him will find Him.**