



## "REASONS TO REJOICE"

"Your Words were found, and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Jeremiah 15:16

### JOB: LESSON 12

Today we get to meet the fourth and final character in Job's drama before the Lord Himself shows up. We closed chapter 32 with the statement "The words of Job are ended." Now enter, stage right, a young man named Elihu. His speech lasts six chapters, the longest one in the book. Where in the world did this man come from? It seems that he may have been present all along, silently listening to the arguments between Job and his three friends. Being younger than all of them and wanting to show respect for their age, he waits. And he waits. But finally, after Job is done presenting his case and the three amigos have nothing left to say, Elihu jumps in to offer his two cents. And boy, does he speak up! It appears that he'd been getting angrier and angrier as he listened to their words, and finally, he couldn't take anymore. It was time for him to set them all straight.

We will be reading all six chapters in our lesson this week, so hang in there. It's important to look at his argument as a whole rather than broken up into pieces. To be honest, it's a little bit confusing. It's not his words or the poetic pictures he paints that are puzzling, it's more whether or not his points are valid in regards to Job. Each commentary I read on these chapters differed somewhat in their interpretation. Some think he was a great guy, while others rip him to shreds, putting him in the same category as the other three. I found that he did bring some new insight to the table, but whether or not it was applicable to Job's situation is another story. He also presents an awesome picture of the wonder and majesty of God that is so beautiful. But again, is it applicable to Job's life? One author wrote, "Interpreters differ over whether or not Elihu should be regarded as a profound thinker who anticipates God and substantially solves the dilemma of Job or as a pompous buffoon who contributes virtually nothing original." Perhaps it's a bit of both. Swindoll wrote, "Elihu provided part true wisdom, part error, part set-up for the book's climactic ending, and part comic relief -- if you can see the humor in taking two chapters' worth of ideas and expanding them into six!"

I also want to share some insight from David Atkinson in his book, The Message of Job. He wrote, "Elihu opens up the theme of wisdom, which is a theological bridge in the story between Job's experience and his hearing the Lord. This will prove to be the theological significance of Elihu. But there is perhaps a dramatic purpose as well. These chapters give us space between Job and Yahweh. They illustrate, just by being there, that Yahweh is not forced into a quick reply by the intensity of Job's entreaties. God acts in his own time; He is not at human beck and call. He 'comes down his own secret stair,' and in sovereign and gracious care, He decides the timing of His intervention. Elihu gives us this place to pause, and so serves the author's purpose of displaying the freedom of God. Elihu blusters away, he makes his own mistakes. But in the middle of his blusterings, here are some gems, and it is these gems which are part of the preparation Job needs -- and we the readers need -- to be ready to hear the Lord!"

### First and Second Days

1. In our lesson, we're simply going to read chapters 32 through 37. I'm going to leave space to summarize. For each chapter, jot down the main points, repeated words, thoughts or phrases, including **whom Elihu is speaking to**. There will also be some added questions for each individual chapter.

### Chapter 32:

- A. Who is Elihu?
- B. How many times does Elihu say that he was "burning with anger"?
- C. Who is he angry with?

**Chapter 33:**

- A. To whom is Elihu addressing his comment?
- B. How many times does Elihu repeat the word "pit"?
- C. What challenge does he give Job?

**Chapter 34:**

- A. Who is Elihu talking to in this chapter?
- B. What does Elihu call the three friends? How does he refer to them?
- C. What does Elihu think Job is guilty of?

**Chapters 35:**

- A. Who is Elihu addressing?
- B. How does Elihu describe Job's words?
- C. What are some things Elihu says about God?

**Chapter 36:**

- A. Who is Elihu talking to?
- B. Where does Elihu claim to get his knowledge?
- C. Does Elihu believe that God is disciplining Job? How do you know?

**Chapter 37:**

- A. Who is Elihu addressing?
- B. List some things Elihu says about nature.
- C. Is there truth to Elihu's words? Any untruths?

That's it for today. It's good to get the gist of the chapters before we jump in a little deeper. Nobody interrupts Elihu or argues with him. I wonder why not? I wonder if they are all just stumped. I wonder if Job is so depressed that he is at the end of his rope. I'm so glad God enters the scene in our next lesson. I can't wait to hear from Him.

**Memory Verse of the Week:** "God thunders marvelously with His voice; He does great things which we cannot comprehend." Job 37:5

### Third Day

**Work on your memory verse.**

The name Elihu means "My God is He." He is Barakel's son, whose name means "God blesses." Barakel was a citizen of the land of Buz. The land of Uz and Buz were named for two brothers who lived in the time of Abraham (Genesis 22:21). As it had been pointed out, commentaries differ on what to do with Elihu. He appears very arrogant, that's for sure. But it's funny that when God shows up and speaks in chapter 38, He rebukes Job's three friends but not Elihu. While some think Elihu's words are so insignificant that God completely ignores him, others think simply that God was not angry with him. Although some of his arguments were wrong, he didn't speak falsely about God like the others did. Could God have actually approved of some of the things he said? Elihu also seems to be a bit more sensitive to Job's suffering than the others, and doesn't only rely on age and experience as a basis for his argument. You can be the judge and determine what "you" think of Elihu's words. ☺

The one thing we know for sure is that Elihu believed he was right. I like what John Wesley said in his later years, "When I was young I was sure of everything. Now, having been mistaken a thousand times, I'm not so sure of most things as I was before. At present, I am hardly sure of anything but what God has revealed to me." We should remember this!

While Elihu repeats some of the same arguments that the other friends have, he has some additional insight he wants to share. Along with proving that Job was guilty of unconfessed sin, he was trying to demonstrate that Job had a wrong and distorted view of God.

1. Let's begin today by going back to chapters 32 and 33. Why was Elihu so mad?
2. Elihu demands that they listen to him, appearing to be very self-assured. He takes more than an entire chapter to introduce himself! Why should they listen to him, according to Elihu?
3. What prideful claims does he make about himself in these chapters, especially in verses 32:14; 21-22, and 33:3-6?
4. Who did Elihu think was the final authority?

Elihu was upset at the failure of the friends and of Job himself. He believed he was inspired, and that he had the ability to be impartial. He continued to demand attention from all of them. Quite a bold young man, I'd say.

5. Did you happen to notice how many times Elihu call Job by his first name? Do you think this would be unusual in the East? Why? (Did his other friends?)
6. How many times in chapters 32 and 33 does Elihu use the words "my," "mine," or "I"? What does this tell us?

7. Have you ever been corrected by a "younger" person? Were you able to receive it? What makes that so difficult sometimes?

8. Elihu repeats Job's arguments in 3:8-11. Did Job really say this? (See 6:30, 10:7, 12:4, 23:11-12).

Elihu doesn't even make his first point until 33:12. Elihu believed that God speaks to man in many ways, but we often miss it. God could speak through dreams and visions (33:15-16), but also through suffering. God can use pain to teach us about ourselves, to warn us, to humble us, and to bring us into submission to His will. He also can use suffering and calamity to keep us from falling into certain sins (33:8-33). Pain can be a great teacher.

9. Has God ever used pain in your life to keep you from falling into a certain sin? If not, what would be an example of this? (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)

10. Would you say that pain has been a good teacher in your life? In what way?

11. God can use visions, dreams, sickness, and pain to keep us from sinning and going into the "pit" of death. How is this evidence of His grace? (33:24)

Elihu suggests that God can even speak to man through the ministry of a special mediating angel (33:23-26). Some see this as Elihu's amazing prophetic statement, referring to the work of Jesus Christ as our mediator. Of these verses, Wiersbe wrote, "It seems likely that this interceding angel is the Angel of the Lord, our Lord Jesus Christ, the mediator who gave His life as a ransom for sinners (1 Timothy 2:5; Mark 10:45). As the Angel of the Lord, the Son of God visited the earth in the Old Testament times to deliver special messages and accomplish important tasks (Genesis 16:9; 22:11; Exodus 3:2; Jude 9). But Elihu saw this angel not only as a mediator between God and men, but also as the ransom of sinners. This is the heavenly mediator that Job has been asking for throughout the debate!"

12. According to Elihu, what would happen if Job repented? (33:25-28)

13. How do these two chapters apply to your life specifically?

See you tomorrow, ladies! You're awesome! I pray that we will always have teachable hearts, no matter how old or young we are!

#### **Fourth Day**

**Work on your verse -- it's a great one to remember!**

1. Read Job 34 and 35. Elihu quotes Job's complaints in verses 34:5-9. Did Job really say this?
  
2. Chapter 34:11 summarizes Elihu's point. What does he say?
  
3. What does chapter 34 say about the justice of God? Summarize his words.

In chapter 34 and 35, Elihu attempts to defend the justice of God. Job felt like he was being treated as if he was God's enemy. God wouldn't tell him why this was happening to him, which didn't seem fair. Elihu recalls Job's statement from 6:4 that God was shooting arrows at him and that he was being denied justice (10:7; 6:29). Elihu argues that there is no "injustice" with God. Remember that Job was wrestling with the justice of what was happening to him. He was allowing God the "freedom" to be "unjust" because God is God and He can do what He wants, but Job didn't understand it, wondering if God just acted arbitrarily. Elihu reminds Job that God can neither be unjust or unfair. (34:10-12). Elihu claims that what seems like injustice to us is really justice, because God is paying sinners back for what they do (34:11). He says that God will bless the righteous and judge the wicked, no matter how long it takes, even when it's not according to our time frame. He also says that God governs justly, without exception (34:16-20). As people, we can be unfair, but God shows no partiality.

Ray Stedman wrote, "According to Elihu, Job sees God as capricious. Job had come to suspect that God acts without good reason and even according to changeable moods, just as human beings do. So Elihu summarizes all that Job has been saying, how God has wounded Job without reason and treated him as an enemy. To Job's flawed attitude, Elihu offers this rebuke, 'But I tell you, in this you are not right, for God is greater than man' (Job 33:12). We always need to remember that God's understanding is infinitely greater than ours. His plan and purposes are far deeper than our own. Behind every act of God is a loving heart, and He always acts in accordance with His loving nature. When we fail to acknowledge His wisdom and his love, it is we who are in error, not God. Elihu reminds Job that God always speaks, but sometimes we are deaf to His voice."

4. Read Job 34:13-15. Elihu is arguing that God is not accountable to anyone for his decisions. God was not "appointed" to rule the universe, He made the universe! What does Elihu say would happen if God withdrew Himself?
  
5. In verses 21-28, Elihu reminds Job that God doesn't need to put people on trial to see their hearts. We can't hide anything from Him. According to these verses, are we accountable for our actions? (Should the wicked expect mercy if they have rejected God?)

6. According to 34:31-37, what is Job's only hope, according to Elihu?

Referring to verses 29-33, Stedman writes some very interesting words. He says, "God's decisions cannot be questioned because He is absolutely sovereign over individuals and nations, and He accepts no substitute for righteousness. People sometimes want to come to God on their own terms and invent their own salvation. They say, 'I promise to be a better person. I promise to reform.' But reform is not what God wants from us." Verse 33 says, "Should God reward you on your terms when you refuse to repent?" Man is accountable to God for their decisions, not the other way around."

7. Read Job 35. Elihu is basically exhorting Job to stop talking, wait on God, and trust Him (vs 14-16). How would you summarize Elihu's words?

God is just and His character remains the same no matter what we do. Our sins affect the people around us (vs 8), but our good deeds can't bribe Him and our bad ones don't threaten Him. I love this quote, "God can't change for the better because He is perfect, and He can't change for the worse because He is holy."

8. Write your thoughts about the quote above. Have you ever been guilty of thinking that way? Have you ever "judged" God for not answering you on your own terms?

9. It's important to see that although Job doesn't "see" God in his situation, God sees Job (vs 14). Are you going through a season where you don't "see" God or sense His presence? How does this bring you comfort? What should you continue to do?

Stedman wrote, "This is one of the great lessons of the book of Job. The Omnipotent God of the universe is also the Lord of our suffering. When we hurt, we may not sense His presence. We may not feel that He is listening or answering our prayers, but He is present even in our pain."

### Firth Day

**Write out your verse from memory.**

Elihu talks about *God's* graciousness in chapter 33, His justice in 34 and 35, and now he'll remind Job of *God's* greatness and majesty in chapters 36 and 37. These are great chapters!

1. Read Job 36. In verses 1-15, Elihu talks about *God's* purpose for man. Summarize his thoughts.
2. In verses 16-21, Elihu warns Job of three things. What are they?
3. In verses 22-33, Elihu reminds Job of how great *God* is, especially through His power in nature. Summarize his thoughts in your own words. How does *God's* sovereignty and goodness create a sense of awe in Elihu? Does it do the same for you?
4. Read chapter 37, which is a continuation of chapter 36. According to verse 1, how does Elihu describe his feelings?
5. Take some time and meditate on these amazing truths about *God*. Then choose a few phrases or thoughts that particularly ministered to you, or made your heart "leap" from its place! Why did you choose them?

6. What "attributes of God " does Elihu mention in this chapter?
  
7. Why did Elihu exalt God's greatness and power when addressing Job? Why do you think he thought it necessary to remind Job about the character of God?
  
8. When counseling or ministering to others in their pain, how often do you choose to make these points?
  
9. In 37:14-20, Elihu seems to challenge Job to place his wisdom against God's and see how it measures up. ("God later takes up this line of questioning with Job as well, but He takes it in a different direction. He doesn't accuse Job of being a sinner but will force him to confront the inadequacy of his understanding of God and of justice." Can you explain this section in your own words?
  
10. How can all the different "seasons" in your life remind you of God's greatness?
  
11. Elihu was afraid that Job would look for shortcuts out of his suffering and miss God's message to him. Are you tempted to do the same? Is there a shortcut that you've been trying to take? What does this mean?

**In conclusion, Elihu is basically telling Job that if God was big enough to handle the mysteries and majesties of creation, He's big enough to handle all his problems, sufferings, and questions. Can you hold on to that truth today?**