

21a JOB

This is Friday, the 6th of October 2006. We continue tonight our study in the book of Job, resuming in chapter 36. Let's take a moment as we begin to recognize the role of God's Holy Spirit.

He is much misunderstood in our day and age. There is a lot of misinformation about why God has given the Holy Spirit and exactly what He does. We understand that His role is primarily as a teacher and facilitator of our understanding and application of God's Word.

That's why Jesus sent Him. That is His function as He resides in our soul. There is no more important time for that function than when we study God's Word together.

Shall we pray? Father, we are grateful for this opportunity to study the book of Job. We have seen so many marvelous truths in it. We ask your blessing on us as we examine this chapter tonight that we will find a correct understanding of it.

In so doing, we will accumulate for ourselves truths and viewpoint that will enable us to live as you would have us to live in the days ahead as we look forward to the ever more closely approaching return of the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray these things in His name. Amen.

Last time, we worked our way through the entire 35th chapter of the book of Job. Elihu is speaking. He is now delivering himself of several monologue speeches in response to the three friends and Job.

He gave an introduction. He sort of set the course, charted the path that he was going to follow in chapters 32 and 33 and 34. In chapter 35, having spoken of the nature of the wicked and the fact that under oppression they don't look for God, they don't look for their maker, the one who gives them songs in the night, Elihu turned to Job and he said, Do you think this? For justice you say, my righteousness is from God.

Because you say, what benefit is it to you? What do I benefit from my sin? I myself will return to you words and to your friends with you. So he is continuing this theme of response. Look to the heavens and sea and take note of the clouds.

They are high from you. If you sin, what do you accomplish against Him? When you multiply your transgressions, what do you do to Him? Verse 7, if you are righteous, what do you give to Him? Or what does He receive from your hand? To a man like yourself goes the result of your wickedness, as it were. And a son of man will experience the benefit of your righteousness.

Because of the multitude of oppressions they cry out, they cry out for help because of the arm of the mighty, but no one says, where is God my maker? Who gives songs in the night? And this idea of finding a song in the night is really central to the book of Job. Job is in the valley of the

shadow of death. He is going through a dark night of the soul, as people like to say.

Who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth? Who makes us wiser than the birds of heaven? This is the question we should ask when we find ourselves suffering for a cause other than discipline. So in the night, in oppression, they cry out in verse 12, but He does not answer. There is a cry from the rising faces of evil men, but it is not seeking relationship with God.

It isn't seeking the closeness of God. Now this is what Job has been calling for throughout this book. So Elihu goes on in verse 13 of chapter 35 to say, Surely this is futility.

God will not hear, and the Almighty will not take note of this sort of cry for help. Also, because you say you do not take note of it, judgment is before His face, and you strengthen yourself for it. You're not going to take note of the oppression.

In the same way that God doesn't take note of the cry of the oppressed, Job is not going to take note of the oppression. Judgment is before His face. You strengthen yourself for it.

Now because it isn't there, He punishes in anger and does not know the transgression greatly. And then verses 15 and 16 are where we left off last time. The literal translation seems a bit confusing.

And Job, and then we have the word hevel, which we saw in Ecclesiastes. It's a very old word that has the idea of something that is a vapor, something that is transitory or ephemeral. Job, with a view toward hevel as it were, will open his mouth.

In no knowledge will he multiply words. And I really think that verse 16 of chapter 35 comes more in the form of a question. Does Job open his mouth for nothing? Does Job open his mouth for an ephemeral, transitory purpose? Does he speak many words for nothing? This is Elihu's question.

I don't think it is a statement that Job is opening his mouth in vain. I don't think it is a statement that Job multiplies words without knowledge. God says something else later on in this book about the words of Job.

He says Job has spoken of Him correctly. So I think this has to be understood as a question. Either that or this is a characterization of the words of the friends.

And as I continue to finish up this translation and smooth it out and annotate it, I'll give you a smoother version of that. But we move on tonight to chapter 36. Let's take a look at it in the New King James.

Elihu 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. And we continue to see scattered through this speech, or these speeches of Elihu, these declarations.

What does he say? Knowledge comes forth from me. The Spirit of God is speaking through me. Pure wisdom, golden words drop from my lips and so on.

And this is probably going to be considered effrontery unless we recognize that he is a figure. He is foreshadowing someone who really can and does speak with this level of authority. Truly my words are not false.

One who is perfect in knowledge is with you, or complete in knowledge. 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, or godless in heart, store up wrath. They do not cry for help when He binds them. Now, I've read what I've read thus far just to get to this statement.

This really ties back to the central idea we saw in the last chapter, doesn't it? Those who do not cry out for help. Whatever else you want to say, however else you want to try to construe these statements, Elihu is clearly drawing a contrast between two different kinds of people who find themselves oppressed. So, clear the decks.

It's really difficult. I think it's exceedingly difficult. When you come to this book, you come to these chapters, you come to the words of Elihu and you start reading them, you almost immediately start kind of bogging down and glazing over because the statements don't seem to flow and they don't seem to connect and communicate a coherent line of argument.

Does it seem that way to you? It certainly seems that way to me. So, what we do is find key points that are really irrefutable. They're not really open to question.

There are certain fixed reference points in Elihu's words and by landing on these and anchoring to those and drawing lines between those dots, we can construct the flow of thought. We also have some assumptions that we make. We do not assume that Elihu is blowing smoke, that he is an arrogant young man whose words are preserved just because it shows the inane effrontery of youth.

We believe that these are valuable words, that they are communicating valuable truth and that they reflect in some way, in a foreshadowing type of way, the future ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. These are our assumptions. This is the reason that our conclusions are going to differ from most commentators and most scholars who come to these pages and come to these words.

Because the easiest way to make sense of this very old Hebrew and this poetic construction is to decide that it is nonsensical and it's just the record of a nonsensical speech by a young buck who stands up and blows a lot of smoke. That is the way this section of Job is handled and dismissed by many, many, in fact I would say most commentators dismiss Elihu as a windbag who is so far off the mark that Job and his three friends don't even respond to him. This is a later edition, it doesn't belong in the book.

God is going to speak and ignore everything Elihu said and so on. These are the arguments that you'll find in the literature. So, what are our fixed points here? Stay with me now.

I know this is kind of heavy sledding, but we're rapidly approaching an understanding and when God starts speaking, that's really the best part. It reminds me of the Gospels in the New Testament. When you see Jesus working and speaking, it just doesn't get any better than that.

In the book of Job, after Satan arguing with God and all of these men talking and expounding their ideas, when God speaks, the muddy water becomes clear, the clouds depart from the sky and you say, oh, so that's what the book was about. At least hopefully that's what we see. But here we are in chapter 36, so let's take this first section, these first dozen or so verses and see if we can parse them in a little bit better way in the light of our fixed reference points, in the light of our belief about the nature of Elihu's speech that it really does mean something and it is important.

It is an attaining up to the understanding of these wise words that we have to... that's what we're trying to do. We're trying to reach up and gain this understanding. We're not looking down on a buffoon.

So, chapter 36. Here we have another speech by Elihu. We know that in chapters 32 through 37 we have a number of these speeches.

A new one begins here in chapter 36. We know that because of this marker, Elihu also proceeded and said. His argument is broken into these discrete sections.

He says, bear with me a little. And it's the same sort of request that I have just made. He says, I know that this argument may be difficult to follow, but bear with me, stick with me, keep on concentrating.

It's going to come around and it's like Perry Mason. All of these things are going to be tied together and it will all make sense, Your Honor, if you'll just let me continue a little further. So, the

verb here that's translated Elihu also proceeded is something new.

It's the verb Yasaph, Y-A-S-A-P-H. And it's Yosef, actually, here. The O-E, as I've told you many times, that's like putting I-N-G on an English word.

So, it says, he was doing again, literally. This Y, Yosef, from Yasaph, means he added. This is the very same word that gives Joseph his name.

Remember when Rebecca named her son, she said, I'm going to have another one. God will add, he will add. Yosef, he adds.

And so the first word in chapter 36 is basically and Joseph. And he was adding, or he added, Elihu. He added and said.

Then he gives a P-A-L imperative, or a command. P-A-L is the intensive stem in Hebrew. And this is from Katar, K-A-T-A-R.

And it means to bear with, to have patience, to literally, it means you need to stick around for a period of time. There is time in view in the verb Katar. The dictionary of biblical languages says, this is to bear with, formally to wait, i.e., have patience with someone as an extension of lengthening a duration of time by waiting.

How many verses in the Bible talk about, wait on the Lord, be of good cheer, he shall strengthen thy heart. Wait, I say, on the Lord. They who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.

And so on. Well, that's what Elihu basically implores from his audience. Elihu says, wait for me.

Literally. Katar li. Le is the preposition to or for.

The E on there is me. Wait for me. Wait for me now.

Wait for it. It's coming. Persevere.

Persist. Keep paying attention. Wait for me a little and I will show you.

Wait for me a little or a little longer. Be patient with me a little longer and I will instruct you because I still have words to speak on God's behalf. And this is not really words in the sense of dabar or deber.

D-A-B-A-R is the verb from which we get the noun words or matters. This is the noun for words that comes from the verb that means to utter. I have utterances.

Issues, matters, words, that's dabar. This is equivalent in Greek to the difference between logos, word, and you remember when Jesus said, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every spoken word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Rema.

Well, meleem here is the word for words that comes from the verb that means to utter, to speak. So this is verbal utterance. It's not a case or an issue or a matter.

Dabar is often used not only for word but for matter or issue. Concept, like logos. Dabar is like logos.

Mal or meleem here, mala is a feminine word and these are utterances. I have utterances from God I want to pass on to you. Why am I belaboring this point? Remember, conceptually speaking now, one of our assumptions is that Elihu is foreshadowing the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus has spent eternity in the presence of the Father. He has heard Him speak. What He has heard His Father say, that's what He lives by.

That's what He promotes and what He communicates when He comes to earth. I'm not going to live by physical substance alone, by the words that proceed from God. By the way, you remember that on Tuesday nights we're taking a look at secular humanism, at materialism, at empiricism, at the whole atheistic evolutionary viewpoint of life.

And one of the things that is a constant refrain in that viewpoint, citing science and quoting scientific studies and scientific discoveries, and this is what science has learned, and science is going to eventually give us all the answers. Look at how many things science has already figured out. Look at our technology.

Look at our advances. But this is all in the empirical material world, isn't it? I love science. I love light bulbs and radios and computers and all the wonderful things that science has figured out.

I love the advances in medicine that enable me to have happy teeth and a happy body and take an antibiotic and get over an infection. Science is wonderful. I don't have a thing in the world against science properly understood, properly construed, properly defined.

But people look to science and they say, look at these great successes, look at the great technology that we have developed through science. Science is now my God. Science will provide.

Science will answer my questions. Nothing exists except what science can define and what science can observe and what science can test and empirically provide evidence for. Science is great in its sphere, but science deals with the tangible.

What is the nature of the beauty of a nocturne by Chopin? Give me the scientific basis for the beauty of Waltz in A-sharp minor by Chopin. Give me the empirical nature of the beauty of a painting by Rodin or Cezanne. Science makes feeble attempts to say, well, there's a certain color combination, there's a certain pattern.

Science fails utterly when it comes to intangibles. Why is Hemingway considered a great author

and Carrot Top is considered a lousy author? What is the science of that? Why is Shakespeare considered one of the finest literary geniuses of the last thousand years and others are not? Where is the science? Where are the formulas that you can calculate and compute the greatness of a piece of literature or the greatness of a work of art or the greatness of music? Well, science utterly falls on its face because it's not equipped, it's not intended, or by its very nature it cannot cope with intangibles. Science can't deal with spiritual matters.

Where is the science of inner peace? Where is the science of the fruit of the spirit? Where is the science for patience? Where is the science for moving away from sinful, evil patterns of behavior? There is no science for that. Science is ill-equipped, is non-equipped to deal with those. So science has its place.

There are words to speak on God's behalf. There are issues here that are going to deal with the intangibles, with the spiritual realm. This is what we're going to address ourselves to.

It's not the realm of substance. It's not the realm of the material and the mundane. Just remember this when you travel through the world and you have this assault that says, your religious beliefs, your Christian faith is unscientific.

Therefore, it has no value, it has no merit because it's unscientific. Excuse me? It's not in a realm where science has any traction, where science has any ability. Science can no more tell me about faith and things that belong to God than it can tell me about the nature of great classical music.

Science is helpless. It's blind, deaf, and dumb when it comes to these intangible things. So, this is why Elihu says, I am going to talk about utterances of God.

I will fetch my knowledge, it says, from afar in your New King James. This has the idea of being knowledge that has come near from a faraway place. Literally, in Hebrew, it says, I will carry my knowledge to, from, afar.

So, this is wide-ranging knowledge. Knowledge that's near, knowledge that's far. This is why some translations say, I will speak comprehensively.

This is comprehensive knowledge, encompassing knowledge. It's near, it's far. It goes to and from.

To my Maker, I will ascribe righteousness. Now, once again, does this hark back? What do the people under oppression in the last chapter fail to do? Who do they fail to look for? They don't seek their Maker. They don't have a concern or an interest in their Creator.

No one says, where is God, my Maker? Issues of righteousness? What is Job's issue in seeking God through all of these last 30-odd chapters? I want to look for God because I know that righteousness is an issue with Him, and righteousness is an issue with me. I have maintained my

personal righteousness, and I want vindication from God, my Maker, because I know He's a righteous judge. And there is a sense in which no one can stand before Him pure, but to the extent that a man can be pure before God, Job says, I'm pure.

And I look for God to vindicate me. I know that I will stand before Him on the last day. I will see Him for my flesh, even though the worms devour me.

I will see my Redeemer. He's the one that gives me this righteousness. So to Job, these concepts of his Maker, a just and righteous Creator, and the whole issue of righteousness have been prominent throughout his speeches.

Those who come under oppression and don't look for their Maker, they want health, but they don't look for their Maker. They don't look for a wisdom above that of beasts, or a wisdom beyond that of the birds of the air. And this is a sort of backhanded allusion.

You know what the birds of the air have represented elsewhere in Scripture? Birds of the air come and take away the seed that falls on the hard-packed soil. The birds of the air nest in the branches of the kingdom. They're going to roost in it, but they're not going to be part of it or bear the fruit of it.

If anything, they're going to peck away the fruit and roost in the branches. This is a bad thing. I was just listening to Joseph last time we met, talking about all the bad things that happen when too many birds roost around your property.

Well, remember when Jesus said the kingdom of heaven is like a tiny seed that grew into a great tree and the birds of the air roost in the branches? That's the terrors amongst the wheat. That's the evil amongst the good. The birds of the air seldom bode well.

Many times they are a picture of the denizens of heaven that are somewhere down here on earth instead of up near the throne room of God. Who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth? Who makes us wiser than the birds of heaven? They're not looking for that God. So when they cry out, He doesn't answer.

I will ascribe righteousness to my Maker, says Elihu. I will speak a comprehensive knowledge. I'll get knowledge from far away and bring it near.

Who has known the mind of the Lord? Who has declared Him? Well, what does the New Testament say? It is the Son who is going to declare Him, right? Well, this is Elihu speaking. And he says in verse 4, Truly my words are not false. This is kind of a funny statement in Hebrew.

Truly I'm not lying. Truly my words are not false. I'm telling you the truth.

I am not lying. The Apostle Paul is going to use that very phrase in Greek in the New Testament. I tell you the truth.

I am not lying. One complete in knowledge is in your midst. Elihu says, I know it all.

My knowledge is comprehensive. I'm going to speak of my Maker and declare His righteousness and there's no gap in my knowledge. Now this is pretty bold language for a guy who began saying, You all are the elders and the great ones and I did not deign to speak.

I did not dare to speak. I durst not while all you wise grey heads were talking. So, that's his introduction to this speech.

Then he says, Behold, God is mighty. It's our fourth speech now from Elihu. After his introduction he says, Be patient.

Wait on me now. I have utterances to present to you on God's behalf. I'm going to ascribe righteousness to my Maker.

My words are true and not false. My knowledge is complete and not deficient. That's his intro for speech number four.

So now, in verse five he goes on and says, Look, this is an interjection. It's the interjection Hen in Hebrew. And it basically, it's not that different from Henah, which means behold.

It's translated behold throughout the Old Testament. Henah, behold, look. Hen is kind of the same thing.

And it means look, behold, indeed, verily. So let's translate it indeed or truly. El is Kavir.

El, of course, is God. Short form of His name. Sometimes Elihu calls Him Eloah.

Sometimes he calls Him Shaddai. Sometimes he calls Him Elohim. Here he just uses his name El, which is the equivalent of God with a capital G. This, by the way, was the same word that was used throughout the ancient Near East to refer to God.

Much as in English, you can say God with small g and say, well, their God is their emotion, or He is a God of gunnery, or He's a God of archery, or He's the God of computers, or whatever. And you're talking about someone who's just seemingly all-powerful. Well, El is the all-purpose word in the ancient Near East for deity.

And in context, of course, this means the God of Abraham. The God of creation. My maker.

He is mighty. Kavir is a mighty one. It can be used for one who has ruling authority.

We saw this in Job 34.17. Should one who hates justice govern? Will you condemn him who is most just? A few verses later in chapter 34, verse 24, we saw Elihu say, He breaks in pieces the mighty ones, the ruling ones, without inquiry and sets others in their place. So, this is might in the sense of ruling authority. Behold, God is a mighty ruler.

Would be a good sort of interpretive translation here. And lo yemas. Ma'as here is a verb that means to refuse or reject.

So, truly, God is a mighty ruler and He will not reject. He doesn't abuse His ruling authority is the idea. Just because He's a mighty ruler doesn't mean that He rejects or refuses those under His authority.

This verb was used in Judges. I'll just give you one or two examples here. Judges 9.38 talking about Abimelech.

Who is Abimelech that we should serve him? Are not these the people whom you... And then this verb. Rejected, refused. It's translated despised in the New King James Version.

Go out, if you will, and fight with them now. Same word is used in Numbers. I'm giving you the oldest usages.

Numbers 14.31. Your little ones whom you said would be victims, I will bring in. And they will know the land which you have refused, rejected, despised. This is God talking to Israel.

The first generation that came out of Egypt. They didn't have the faith to go into the land. God says, your children, your little ones whom you said would die out here in the wilderness and be victims.

They will be brought in. They will know the land which you have rejected, refused. God is a mighty ruler and He will not refuse.

He will not reject. He will not despise. In other words, He's not a cruel dictator.

He doesn't use that ruling authority to drive people away. Now, mighty ruler is repeated here again. Kavar.

He is a mighty ruler. Literally, with strength of heart. This is koach, which means to be hidden.

So, mighty in the hiddenness of the heart. You have of understanding there, but I think your New King James has a text note that says that it's of heart. He is mighty and strong in heart.

Now, the Hebrew here, because it's poetic, because it's old, because there's not a verb in this second phrase, people have said, well, the text is disturbed and what it's trying to say here is that God will not reject the strong of heart. Well, that's a possibility, but you have the word mighty repeated and unless there's a really compelling reason to change the text, and I don't find one in the Syriac or in the Septuagint or whatever, so we take it as it lies here and understand the verb to be repeated or to be omitted, I should say, because this is poetic. So, he is a mighty ruler and does not despise or reject.

A mighty ruler, strong of heart. Strong in purpose. He doesn't relent.

He doesn't change his mind. He is consistent. He does not change.

In verse 6, it says, once again, it starts out with a negative. He does not, and then we have the word for life of the wicked. So it's lo yachaya.

You know how the Hebrews say l'chaim when they're toasting. They say to life. La is to.

Chaim is life or lives. To life. L'chaim.

Well, this is the word chay, C-H-A-Y, which is life. And it is a verb and it's in the pl or the intensive and he does not give life, literally. He does not enliven or does not promote the life or preserve the life of the wicked.

This is the rasha. And mishpat, to the poor he gives. Justice to the poor he gives.

And you have that standard sort of verbal verb, noun, noun, verb pattern that you find so often in Hebrew where in the first phrase you have the verb and then the object and then in the second part you have the object and then the verb. So, he does not enliven. This is life in the sense of its quality.

In the same way that the Bible often talks about eternal life, it's life in the sense of quality. He does not grant quality life or he doesn't promote a life for the wicked. But, justice to the poor he gives or he will give.

This is not time. He does not withdraw his eyes from the righteous, but they are with kings on the throne. This is a little long in English, but it's shorter in Hebrew.

What's the point here? What is he saying as he draws these contrasts? God has ruling authority. God is impartial. We know this from James.

There is no partiality with God. He doesn't refuse or reject out of hand. There is a criteria for God's policy.

There is a criteria on which God bases His policy toward men. What is the context here of this section? There are two kinds of people. There are those who cry out for God, who look for His righteousness, and there are those who don't, who don't look for their Maker, who aren't interested in having a song in the night or getting a knowledge that's beyond the birds and the animals.

Two kinds of people. And Elihu says, now that I've talked about this, bear with me. I'm going to go further.

I'm going to speak in utterance on behalf of God. And what's his point now in these verses? This

distinction that he drew in the last couple of chapters, two kinds of people, those who are seekers of God and those who are not, those who look to God for their righteousness and those who don't. Elihu says, now bear with me, stay with me, wait for my point here.

Here's my utterance. It's perfect. It's complete.

It's important. God's ruling policy is based on that distinction. Does it make sense? You see where Elihu's line of argument is leading? He says, look, you can see the two kinds of people when trouble hits, some of them look for God and cry out for Him and want to learn, like Job, this goes all the way back to chapter 33 and 34 and through 35.

Difficulties, hardships, the evil that is in the world today produces responses that differentiate people into two classes, those who look for their Maker, those who want to learn from Him and those who don't. Here's the big payoff from that observation. Elihu says, now if you're hanging with me and following my argument, here's the point.

God has ruling authority and He uses that ruling authority and He doesn't grant deliverance and life and help to the wicked, to those who aren't looking for Him. It's the poor, it's the humble that He's going to benefit and that He's going to bless. These oppressions, these hardships, these tough times, like Job is experiencing, these out the two kinds of soul that exist on the planet.

It reveals it. James 4.6 says what? God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. This is the Old Testament, James 4.6. This is Elihu's point.

Well, we're here at verse 7. We've got to pause here and take our break. When we come back, we'll see Elihu advance this argument further and clarify it as we go through chapter 36.