

JOB 32-37

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Introduction

Last week we saw how Job emerges as a king in the midst of his trials. Job speaks the wisdom of nobility from the dust and ashes. This nobility is not a self-righteous pride; it is faith and hope in the God of the resurrection. Today we consider the last satan, a fourth accuser who rises against Job, the young man, Elihu. Elihu is a complex character in some ways; and many commentators have disagreed over him.

Elihu's First Speech

Elihu is the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram (32:1). Elihu is a Hebrew whose name means, "He is my God," closely related to the name Elijah. Elihu is furious that Job thought his righteousness was greater than God's (32:2). Elihu is also furious with the three friends who have not found any answer to Job's assertions and condemned Job (32:3). He is a young man who says that he has been listening and waiting for an appropriate opportunity to speak (32:4-14). He says that he will speak now since they have no more words to speak (32:15-16). He, on the other hand, is pregnant with words, and he will constrain the wind in his belly to rip open (32:18-19). Elihu insists that he is the answer to Job's request. He is Job's mouth before God (33:8). He insists that he is upright, and that it is the Wind/Spirit of God that flows through him (33:2-5). Elihu says that Job is not right to insist that he is innocent (33:8-12). God speaks sufficiently (33:12-18), and He even sends messengers so that after chastening a man, a man's righteousness may be restored to him if he confesses his sins (33:13-30).

Elihu's Second Speech

Elihu says that it is not fitting for a wicked king to act as a judge (34:17), but not just anyone can point this inconsistency out (34:18). Therefore, it is God who providentially enacts this justice (34:10-11, 19-22). In other words, God has judged Job as wicked and there is no need for an appeal (34:23). Job is a wicked king, and God has revealed this openly to all (34:24-37).

Elihu's Third Speech

Elihu says that Job is necessarily implying that he is more righteous than God because he says that it doesn't matter if he is righteous or not (35:2-3, cf. 34:5-9). Elihu tries to answer Job by asking how anything we do (righteous or wicked) really affects God (35:4-8). In particular, He is under no obligation to answer prideful men, and the fact that He does not answer does not impugn His justice (35:9-16).

Elihu's Fourth Speech

Again, Elihu claims to speak on behalf of God (36:2). His knowledge is perfect (36:4). Elihu repeats what the other friends have argued but applies it specifically to kings like Job (36:5-21). Elihu even seems to agree with Job in the abstract when he says that God's eyes are on the righteous, and that they remain on the throne with (righteous) kings (36:7). But when calamity falls on even an apparently righteous king, Elihu is forced to conclude that he was actually wicked. Elihu reminds Job that God is great and mighty, and he illustrates God's greatness with the image of a terrific thunder storm (36:26-37:13). Elihu tells Job to consider the Storm (37:14-18): does he really think he can speak to the Storm (37:19-22). God is a mighty storm: we cannot speak to Him and we cannot find Him (37:23). He is a righteous storm; that should be enough (37:24). But 38:1-2 is a fairly decisive answer.

Job and Elihu

After the words of Job are ended (31:40), the three friends leave off answering Job "because he was righteous in his own eyes" (32:1). But Elihu burns with anger and continues the storm of words, the wind continues to blow. And with four consecutive speeches, it blows even harder than ever. Many commentators note that Elihu's speeches seem out of place. His appearance and disappearance is surprising. He arrives with the same kind of abruptness as the first calamities. In fact, remember that there were four messengers who brought the tidings of the calamities, and now there have been four more messengers of ill tidings.

Conclusions and Applications

It's worth remembering what the rest of Scripture says about Job: He was surely one of the most righteous men (Ez. 14, 20), and he was steadfast in his perseverance (Js. 5:11). Job is an example to follow, and the central example is his faith, his refusal to doubt his righteousness. And so the question is: do you cling to your integrity like Job (27:2-6)? It's important to be clear that Job was not sinless, but he was righteous and perfect. And we are no different.

Paul says that we are to reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ, and therefore, we are to disobey sin (Rom. 6:11-12). Our rebellion against sin is based on the fact that it no longer has dominion over us: we are to present ourselves to God as though we are already alive from the dead (Rom. 6:13). We are not under law but under grace (Rom. 6:14). Like Job's integrity, our security and hope is in the judgment of our Redeemer. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5 that the resurrection is our assurance and confidence (5:1-11), and this is because "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them" (5:19). This means that you are new creations, the old has passed away, and you are righteous.

This means that our battle against sin, the flesh, and the devil begins with faith in Christ who has reconciled everything to God. The death and resurrection of Jesus has accomplished the reconciliation of the world. Broken relationships, death, sin and guilt, disease, pain, frustration, failure, shame: a Christian is someone who believes that Jesus dealt with it already in the cross. There is a judgment, and that judgment has already occurred in Jesus. Therefore refuse every accusation that would dethrone you in Jesus. Cling to your integrity.



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