

SPECIAL SPEECHES ON SUFFERING (part one)

We will study Acts 6 by two special speeches. The first special speech will be given by Elihu (32-37). The second special speech will be given by God (38-41).

“A fourth counselor, named Elihu and younger than the other three (32:4, 6-7, 9), has been standing on the sidelines, giving deference to age and listening to the dialogue-dispute. But now he declares himself ready to show that both Job and the three other counselors are in the wrong.” (NIV, 32:1-37:24)

“Elihu’s four poetic speeches (32:5-33:33; ch.34; ch.35; chs.36-37) are preceded by a prose introduction (32:1-4) written by the author of the book.” (NIV, 32:1-37:24)

This lesson will study the four poetic speeches of Elihu

We know that Elihu was younger and knowledgeable of bible doctrine and overly confident that something important has been overlooked in the previous three debates.

1. In the first of Elihu’s speeches, he is confident that he will be able to succeed where the others have failed and capable of answering Job’s argument (chs.32-33)

“I gave you my full attention. But not one of you has proved Job wrong; none of you has answered his argument.” (32:12, 7-12, 15-17)

The author of Job introduces Elihu in 32:1-5 as he did the three friends in 2:11-13.

Elihu has kept silent through the three debates and is about to burst with things to contribute – “For I am full of words, and the spirit within me compels me; inside I am like bottled-up wine, like new wineskins ready to burst. I must speak and find relief; I must open my lips and reply.” (32:18-20)

In ch.33, Elihu speaks directly to Job – “But now, Job, listen to my words; pay attention to everything I say.” (33:1-6, 31-33)

Elihu states that his intention is not to add to Job’s misery (33:7).

Elihu’s method of counsel is to quote Job and then show him where and how he is wrong (33:8-13; 34:6, 9; 35:2-3). Job had opened himself to this challenge – “Can anyone bring charges against me? If so, I will be silent and die.” (13:19, 23) (33:14-33 – God speaks in many ways even divine discipline)

“Elihu feels that Job needs to be corrected. Certainly Job’s perception of God as his enemy (see v.10; 13:24; 19:11) is wrong, but Elihu is also offended by what he considers Job’s claim to purity (see v.9).” (NIV, 33:12)

Actually Job claims to be innocent not sinless (7:21; 9:15, 21; 13:26).

Elihu tells Job God’s purpose in divine discipline – “God does all these things to man – twice, even three times – to turn back his soul from the pit, that the light of life may shine on him.” (33:29-30; Heb.12:5-11).

2. The second of Elihu’s four speeches (ch.34) is divided into three parts (34:1-15) and (34:16-33) and (34:34-37).

Elihu addresses the wisdom of the three friends as well as Job (34:1-4). Elihu attacks Job’s argument of innocence (34:5-9, 21:15). “Elihu again quotes Job and then goes on to defend God’s justice against what he considers to be Job’s false theology (9:14-24; 16:11-17; 19:7; 21:17-18; 24:1-12; 27:2-6).” (NIV, 34:5,9)

“So listen to me, you men of understanding. Far be it from God to do evil, from the Almighty to do wrong.” (34:10) (34:2, 10, 16, 34)

“Job speaks without knowledge; his words lack insight. Oh, that Job might be tested to the utmost for answering like a wicked man! To his sin he adds rebellion; scornfully he claps his hands among us and multiplies his words against God.” (34:35-37)

3. Elihu’s third speech addresses “what does a believer gain by sinning?”

Elihu uses more of Job’s quotes against him – “Do you think this is just? You say, ‘I will be cleared by God.’ Yet you ask him, ‘what profit is it to me, and what do I gain by not sinning?’” (35:1-4; 9:29-31; 21:15) How does a person’s sin and +R affect God? (35:5-8)

“I would like to reply to you and to your friends with you.” (35:4) Elihu reminds them of God’s essence.

Elihu’s argument is “Job himself might not be wicked, but he shares their arrogance. He too receives no answer, because he does not ask rightly (see v.14).” (NIV, 35:12) (35:16) read

4. Elihu’s fourth speech emphasizes his opinion that his counsel is from God and should be taken seriously (36:1-37:24).

“Bear with me a little longer and I will show you that there is more to be said in God’s behalf. I get my knowledge from afar; I will ascribe justice to my Maker. Be assured that my words are not false; one perfect in knowledge is with you.” (36:1-4)

“Elihu states that God uses trouble to gain man’s attention.” (NIV, 36:10, 9-15) “He is wooing you from the jaws of distress to a spacious place free from restriction, to the comfort of your table laden with choice food.” (36:16)

“Elihu warns Job to respond to God’s discipline by turning away from evil (see v.21). Verse 16 shows that he still views Job as a man for whom there is hope.” (NIV, 36:16-21)

Again Elihu expresses his awe of the essence of God (36:22-33) – “At this my heart pounds and leaps from its place.” (37:1) “A continuation of Elihu’s hymnic description of God’s marvels exhibited in the earth’s atmosphere, beginning in 36:27.” (NIV, 37:1-13)

“Job had dared to sign his defense and call for an audience with God (see 31:35). For this, Elihu seeks to shame him. But he softens his tone by including himself as one equally vulnerable to God’s majesty.” (NIV, 37:19-20) (37:22-24)

In the end, Elihu also believes that Job’s suffering is divine discipline due to either some unconfessed sin or living ungodly (33:8-14; 34:11, 26, 37; 36:10-17)

Elihu’s point has been that - “Job speaks without knowledge; his words (theology) lack insight.” (33:31-33; 34:35; 35:16)