

Job 32 - The Mystery Man: Elihu; "Program Notes" to this Cosmic Drama

II. Dialogue (Job 3:1–42:6)

(5) Elihu's four speeches (Job 32:1–37:24)

(A) Introduction (32:1-22)

- (a) Despite waiting on account of his age Elihu desires to speak due to Job's self justification and a lack of conclusion among the three friends (32:1-5)
- (b) Elihu desires to focus on justice (32:6-10)
- (c) Elihu mentions the inadequacy of the three friends' argumentation (32:11-14)
- (d) Elihu is compelled to speak since the three friends failed to answer Job (32:15-22)

Job 32

(5) Elihu's four speeches (Job 32:1–37:24)

(A) Introduction (32:1-22)

- (a) Despite waiting on account of his age Elihu desires to speak due to Job's self justification and a lack of conclusion among the three friends (32:1-5)

1 Then these three men stopped answering Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes.

1 Then these three men ceased answering Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes.

1 These three men stopped responding to Job, because he was claiming to be righteous, in his own opinion.

1 So these three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes.

2 But the anger of Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram, burned against Job; his anger burned because he justified himself before God.

2 But the anger of Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram burned; against Job his anger burned because he justified himself before God.

2 But then Barachel's son Elihu from Buz, one of Ram's descendants, got really angry. He was furious with Job because he had been declaring himself righteous instead of vindicating God.

2 Then was kindled the wrath of Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the kindred of Ram: against Job was his wrath kindled, because he justified himself rather than God.

3 And his anger burned against his three friends because they had found no answer, yet they had condemned Job.

3 And his anger burned against his three friends because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job.

3 Furthermore, he was furious with his three friends because they had not answered Job, but instead had condemned him.

3 Also against his three friends was his wrath kindled, because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job.

4 Now Elihu had waited to speak to Job because they were years older than he.

4 Now Elihu had waited to speak to Job because they were years older than he.

4 Elihu waited to have a word with Job, since the others were older than he,

4 Now Elihu had waited till Job had spoken, because they were elder than he.

5 But when Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of the three men, his anger burned.

5 And when Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of the three men his anger burned.

5 but when he saw that there had been no response from those three, he got even more angry.

5 When Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of these three men, then his wrath was kindled.

(b) Elihu desires to focus on justice (32:6-10)

6 So Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite spoke out and said, "I am young in years and you are old; Therefore I was shy and afraid to tell you what I think.

6 So Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite spoke out and said, "I am young in years and you are old; Therefore I was shy and afraid to tell you what I think.

6 Barachel's son Elihu from Buz responded and said: "I'm younger than you are. Because you're older, I was terrified to tell you what I know.

6 And Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite answered and said, I am young, and ye are very old; wherefore I was afraid, and durst not shew you mine opinion.

7 "I thought age should speak, And increased years should teach wisdom.

7 "I thought age should speak, And increased years should teach wisdom.

7 I thought, experience should speak; abundance of years teaches wisdom.

7 I said, Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom.

8 "But it is a spirit *that is* in mankind, And the breath of the Almighty gives them understanding.

8 "But it is a spirit in man, And the breath of the Almighty gives them understanding.

8 However, a spirit exists in mankind, and the Almighty's breath gives him insight."

8 But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.

9 "The abundant *in years* may not be wise, Nor may elders understand justice.

9 "The abundant *in years* may not be wise, Nor may elders understand justice.

9 "The aged aren't always wise, nor do the elderly always understand justice.

9 Great men are not always wise: neither do the aged understand judgment.

10 "So I say, 'Listen to me, I too will tell what I think.'

10 "So I say, 'Listen to me, I too will tell what I think.'

10 Therefore I'm saying, 'Listen to me!' Then I'll declare what I know.

10 Therefore I said, Hearken to me; I also will shew mine opinion.

The Mystery Man

Commentators differ widely as to what to make of Elihu. Some regard him as a rather brash young man, of cocksure arrogance of youth, seeking to upstage the older men in their errors. Other simply see him as repeating the same arguments of the previous three elders. However, I agree with those few that see Elihu as playing a very significant role in the drama:

1. It is important to note that the rebuke that God gives Job's three friends at the end of this book excludes Elihu! (Why?) He is not rebuked, nor does he have to ask Job to pray for him, as the three friends are told to do (Job 42:7-8).
2. He is given an extremely prominent part in this drama: the longest of all the discourses (six chapters).
3. He always speaks with courtesy and sensitivity to Job, yet with strong and assertive feelings which he confesses. His courtesy is in contrast with the caustic and sarcastic tone of the three "comforters."
4. Perhaps most significantly, Elihu does not speak from his personal experience but from revelation (cf. v8 above).

This is consistent with what we have seen previously: that wisdom and understanding can come only from God, and He can give it to the young as well as to the old. Elihu comes as

the answer to Job's cry for an explanation. God often provides an answer in a manner which we do not expect.

Elihu seems to be a kind of "John the Baptist" of the OT. He gives witness to the Mediator who is God Himself. Elihu appears as a preliminary intermediary before God appears on the scene. He begins where the friends began, and ends with words very similar to those of God's when He at last appears on the scene.

(c) Elihu mentions the inadequacy of the three friends' argumentation (32:11-14)

11 "Behold, I waited for your words, I listened to your skillful speech, While you pondered what to say.

11 "Behold, I waited for your words, I listened to your reasonings, While you pondered what to say.

11 "Look! I have waited to hear your speech, so I listened to your insights while you searched for the right words to say.

11 Behold, I waited for your words; I gave ear to your reasons, whilst ye searched out what to say.

12 "I also paid close attention to you; But indeed, there was no one who refuted Job, Not one of you who answered his words.

12 "I even paid close attention to you; Indeed, there was no one who refuted Job, Not one of you who answered his words.

12 Indeed, I paid close attention to you all, but none of you were able to refute Job or answer his arguments convincingly.

12 Yea, I attended unto you, and, behold, there was none of you that convinced Job, or that answered his words:

13 "So do not say, 'We have found wisdom: God will defeat him, not man.'

13 "Do not say, 'We have found wisdom; God will rout him, not man.'

13 "So that you cannot claim, 'We have found wisdom!' let God do the rebuking, not man;

13 Lest ye should say, We have found out wisdom: God thrusteth him down, not man.

14 "But he has not presented *his* words against me, Nor will I reply to him with your arguments.

14 "For he has not arranged *his* words against me, Nor will I reply to him with your arguments.

14 let him not direct a rebuke toward me. I won't be responding to him with your arguments.

14 Now he hath not directed his words against me: neither will I answer him with your speeches.

(d) Elihu is compelled to speak since the three friends failed to answer Job (32:15-22)

15 "They are dismayed, they no longer answer; Words have failed them.

15 "They are dismayed, they no longer answer; Words have failed them.

15 "Job's friends won't reason with him anymore; discouraged, words escape them.

15 They were amazed, they answered no more: they left off speaking.

16 "Should I wait, because they are not speaking, Because they have stopped *and* no longer answer?

16 "Shall I wait, because they do not speak, Because they stop *and* no longer answer?

16 Shall I continue to wait, since they're no longer talking? After all, they're only standing there; they're no longer responding.

16 When I had waited, (for they spake not, but stood still, and answered no more;)

17 "I too will give my share of answers; I also will tell my opinion.

17 "I too will answer my share, I also will tell my opinion.

17 "I will contribute my arguments as an answer; I'll declare what I know,

17 I said, I will answer also my part, I also will shew mine opinion.

18 "For I am full of words; The spirit within me compels me.

18 "For I am full of words; The spirit within me constrains me.

18 because I'm filled with things to say, and my spirit within me compels me to speak.

18 For I am full of matter, the spirit within me constraineth me.

19 "Behold, my belly is like unvented wine; Like new wineskins, it is about to burst.

19 "Behold, my belly is like unvented wine, Like new wineskins it is about to burst.

19 My insides feel like unvented wine, like it's about to burst like a new wineskin.

19 Behold, my belly is as wine which hath no vent; it is ready to burst like new bottles.

20 "Let me speak so that I may get relief; Let me open my lips and answer.

20 "Let me speak that I may get relief; Let me open my lips and answer.

20 "Let me speak! I need relief! Let me open my lips and respond.

20 I will speak, that I may be refreshed: I will open my lips and answer.

21 "Let me be partial to no one, Nor flatter *any* man.

21 "Let me now be partial to no one, Nor flatter *any* man.
21 I won't discriminate against anyone, and I won't flatter any person,
21 Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's person, neither let me give flattering titles unto
man.

22 "For I do not know how to flatter, *Otherwise* my Maker would quickly take me away.
22 "For I do not know how to flatter, *Else* my Maker would soon take me away.
22 since I don't know the first thing about how to flatter; and the one who made me would
sweep me away as if I were nothing."
22 For I know not to give flattering titles; in so doing my maker would soon take me away.