

Job Chapters 32-34 - John Karmelich

If I had to title these chapters, it'd be "What's the best way to handle an angry person?" Dealing with an angry person is something we can all relate to at one time or another. Someone like that usually doesn't care at all what you want to say in response, they just want to speak their mind! Like most people, I've learned to let them speak their peace. Don't debate them. Just say you're sorry, or you understand their point. Again, they rarely want to debate, so acknowledging their key points usually calms them down!

With that said, let me explain what this has to do with the book of Job. Out of "nowhere" we get a new character in this book. Apparently, he's been listening to the debate between Job and his 3 friends. He's silent till now because he's younger. Since Job's three friends couldn't get him to admit he was guilty of any great sin, we get this new guy, who's in a bad mood and he takes a "six-chapter" stab at Job. What is fascinating about this guy is he gives the longest speech in the book yet never acknowledged by any of the other characters. Right after he finishes, God gives a long speech where he says nothing good or bad about this guy, but God does condemn the other three speakers!

The big question is why is this speech here? Some argue it was added later as a bridge between all the back and forth between Job and his three friends as an "interlude". I disagree. I believe this was a real debate and this guy was there all the time! Maybe he showed up during the debate but because he was not one of Job's old friends, as he didn't get any opening credit (when the debate started). The text says three times in about six verses that this guy (Elihu) was angry!

He doesn't say much new. He's mad at the three fiends because they couldn't find anything wrong with Job's situation. He was mad at Job because he justified his life versus justifying how God acts. All we can gather is he's angry! When someone is yelling at me, it is hard to concentrate on the words, as all I hear is the anger! That's why I'm stressing the point to let someone who is that mad "get it out of his or her system" as one can't respond until they calm down. As I stated he speaks for "six chapters" and I'll get into the crux of his arguments in the second lesson. In this one, the issue is mostly to point out how he disagrees with everyone and to state it once again, he's ticked off!

OK then let me discuss these chapters a little more in detail. First, the good news: The positive aspect of his speech which I'll focus on more in the next lesson, is he talks about the one thing that was not an obvious point so far in this book: That sometimes God punishes us to keep us from sin. One time Paul pointed out when he suffered from a disease and prayed for God to end it, "His grace is sufficient", was God's response. (2nd Corinthians 12:9.) Elihu states in his arguments that God is punishing Job to keep him from sin. He makes that point within the last 3 chapters of his argument (next lesson), but I wanted to give him credit for that here and now.

The problem with Elihu (again the guy who's speaking in these chapters) is long winded, and he spends a lot of time yelling at Job and the other three guys about how wrong they are. Elihu speaks a lot to get to his point. As I've stated, the first three chapters are an introduction, in that Elihu pretty much uses all that space to explain who he is, why he's angry, and he wanted wait 'till the three other guys finished to state what's on his mind. He probably figured if the other three guys got "three rounds of shots" at Job, then it's ok for him to talk for six chapters to get out of his system what he wants to say!

Again, what fascinates me is neither Job nor the three friends say a word about his speech after it's over and done with. Maybe it's because God talks at that point and everybody is in awe of God talking, or it

could just be that Elihu makes a good point about the fact God allowing us to suffer, which can keep us from sin because well, "We're hurting too much to participate in anything bad!" That'll be his key point that he mostly states in the last three chapters of his speech (again that I'll cover in the next lesson).

Let me talk a little more about these three chapters and I want to end with why I believe is God wanted me to study Job. Here in Chapter 32 is in essence, Elihu's opening statement is about why the 3 friends failed to grasp why Job's suffering. Elihu uses a lot of self-flattery, which makes it hard to focus on his long-winded speech. When listening to an angry speaker, it is hard to pay attention when the tone is so harsh. His opening statement is to state who he is, and he wants everyone "Shut up, so he can talk"!

By Chapter 33 he's rebuking Job for not finding an answer to why God is allowing him to suffer! Elihu repeats and even misquotes Job a little, but Elihu is basically pleading with all of them to just listen for a bit so he can speak "nonstop for 6 chapters!" One of the things I find funny is Elihu says God will not respond to man's request for an audience with Him, and yet God gives his own a long speech right after Elihu finishes! I believe Elihu is allowed this speech to give that "what if God is punishing you to stop you from sinning somehow" possibility. Again, my biggest challenge with Elihu is he's "long winded" in his speech so it's tough to deal with his words as he takes forever to make his point. That will lead to my conclusion about these chapters that I'll get to as soon as I discuss Chapter 34.

Again in Chapter 34 Elihu is misquoting Job as to imply God doesn't take delight in when man lives as He desires we live. Remember in the opening chapter of this book God calls Job "righteous", meaning God does care how we behave! Elihu in effect is asking Job, "what gives you the right to criticize any person, because you are not God!" By the way, I do believe we are allowed to judge people as we do it all the time. We may not say anything, but we constantly make judgments about people just as all these men are doing to each other! Bottom line Elihu's key point is we're not God, so we have no right to ask why we suffer in this life! Elihu ends Chapter 34 by stating Job is rebelling more against God based on Job's rebellion to a lack of an answer as to why he is suffering so much.

Time for the bottom line: I am the first to admit, this goes on and on, and never seems to end. A lot of these points that could be made right and wrong by all the men could be stated much quicker without a lot of long-winded speeches so why is all of this here? I thought you'd never ask. One thing I'm sure of is one grows in wisdom by studying the bible. We grow in knowledge as we get older, but wisdom still comes from the creator of the universe, not human knowledge. I assume most of us believe that or else we wouldn't be devout Christians in the first place.

That leads me to the most important thing I've learned this week. Actually, I knew it a long time ago, it just hit me harder as I've studied Job this week. It is that not every word in the bible is "correct". What I mean by that is I believe the bible is God ordained, but He wants us to think about what is said. We're not to assume every word is "true". Let me explain: Coming up in a few chapters, God will speak. He will state specifically that Job's three friends (no mention of Elihu) were wrong in their arguments. It is not that every word everyone says here was wrong, just that they are wrong about their belief that Job's a guilty sinner that must repent! What's my point? That God wants us to study the word and not accept every single word as "Gospel truth". God wants us to think about the arguments made and decide what is true and what is the best way to live our lives. In other words, think about His Word "mediate" on it and consider the arguments. I think God wanted me to study Job to realize we're to think about what is said, meditate on it and decide for ourselves what is God's truth as we study it.

If you liked this study, I wrote a more detailed account some years back with the links on this web site! Thanks for reading this!

