

I mentioned last week that Elihu gives a total of four back-to-back speeches beginning with chapter 32-37. The first speech consists of chapters 32-33. In Chapter 32 (which we considered last week), he speaks to Job's friends, in chapter 33 he speaks to Job himself.

Now, I have to do something I don't like doing, and that is, deviate from the outline I gave you in the bulletin. If you have an outline from the bulletin, I encourage you to simply turn it over and start fresh (because it's useless).

Upon further reflection, I've found this chapter to be far more interconnected than I at first thought. In fact, it begins and ends with bookends (two passages basically identical), and has three related points in between.

There's an Opening Exhortation (vv1-7) and a Closing Exhortation (vv31-34), wherein Elihu exhorts Job to listen to what he's saying. And then in between these, there are three ways in which God speaks to men to get their attention and deliver them from the Pit.

Thus, in each of these three sections, he describes a deliverance from the Pit (v18, v22, and v28). And then in v29 he says—"Behold, God works all these things, twice, in fact, three times with a man, to bring back his soul from the Pit."

The three times (or ways) mentioned are the three sections between the opening and closing exhortations. Thus, our five heads will be: An Opening Exhortation (vv1-7), The First Way God Speaks (vv8-18), The Second Way God Speaks (vv19-22), The Third Way God Speaks (vv23-30), and A Closing Exhortation.

I. An Opening Exhortation (vv1-7)

1. Within these opening verses, Job exhorts Job to listen to all of his words (vv1-4), and then, if he can answer him (vv5-7).
2. (1) Listen to him (vv1-4), v1—"But please, Job, hear my speech, and listen to all my words. Now, I open my mouth; my tongue speaks in my mouth."
3. He then provides three reasons why Job should hear his speech and listen to all his words: his words come from his upright heart (v3a); his lips utter pure knowledge (v3b); God is the one whose given him life (v4).
4. I don't think Elihu is being proud in saying these things, but he's merely speaking plainly and honestly.
5. His words come from an upright or righteous heart, and thus his lips utter pure (or sincere) knowledge.
6. Mal.2:7—"For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, and people should seek the law from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts."
7. (2) Answer him (vv5-7), v5—"If you can answer me, set your words in order before me; take your stand."
8. These are courtroom phrases—Elihu is using the imagery of a defendant within a courtroom before a judge.
9. In verse 6 he describes himself as Job's advocate or spokesman before God (literally – 'as Job's mouth').
10. He provides a reason in v6b—"I also have been formed out of clay"—that is, I too am a weak creature.
11. Thus, Elihu challenges Job to respond to the things he's about to say, and if he can, he himself will defend Job before God.

12. If he can respond, nothing Elihu says will fear or terrify him, nor will his hand be heavy upon him (v7).
13. Job had earlier complained that God's presence was fearful and His hand was heavy on him—I think Elihu is make a veiled reference to this.
14. If Job was able to answer what he was about to say, Elihu was willing to speak on Job's behalf before God.
15. Thus, we learn at the outset, that Elihu speaks in a very different spirit and with a very different purpose than Job's three friends.
16. I don't think that Elihu actually believes that Job is able to answer him—I think he's speaking rhetorically.
17. It's as if he's saying—"Job, listen to what I am about to say, and if you are able to answer me, then I will be willing to defend you before God."

II. The First Way God Speaks (vv8-18)

1. Within this section, Elihu begins his main point, and that is this—God speaks to man in a variety of ways to deliver him from the Pit.
2. Now, let me simply say at the outset, that the Hebrew word rendered "Pit" literally means "destruction."
3. It can refer to the grave (where the body is destroyed" or to hell (where body and soul are destroyed).
4. Throughout the chapter it's rather evident that Elihu uses it of the grave—which is called a pit of destruction.
5. Thus, God uses a number of ways to call man away from the Pit to Himself—dreams and visions (vv8-18), afflictions (vv19-22), and a messenger (vv23-30).
6. Elihu begins this first point, by providing loose quotations or statements Job made in previous chapters.
7. But remember what I said last week—Elihu repeats or portrays these quotations in the worst possible light.
8. Or perhaps a more accurate way of saying this would be—he combs through all that Job has said, and repeats his worst statements.
9. I think all of us would cringe if someone went through our past, and repeated the worst things we've said.
10. These were things Job said at the height of his suffering and pain—when he wasn't thinking very clearly.
11. Furthermore, when he quotes Job as saying, "I am pure, without transgression; I am innocent, and there is no iniquity in me," Job never claimed to be sinless.
12. What Job meant was this—he was innocent of the hypocrisy and wickedness his three friends accused him of.
13. But what Job was guilty of was this—he was guilty of speaking about God in the way and manner he did.
14. If you remember, he accused God of being unkind and unjust, and in this, Job sinned and was unrighteous.
15. V12—"Look, in this you are not righteous, I will answer you, for God is greater than man"—this is really the main point.
16. It's as if he's saying—"Job, I agree you were innocent of what your friends accused you of. But you are not innocent in what you said about God."
17. V13—"Why do you contend with Him? For He does not give an accounting of any of His words"—this verse has been variously translated.

18. The NIV, NASB, and ESV all render the last part of v13 as a quotation and thus question by Job—"Why do you contend against him, saying, 'He will answer none of man's words'"?
19. This was one of several complaints Job had of God, that He failed to speak to him or answer his complaints.
20. This makes good sense of vv14-18, wherein Elihu describes God as speaking to men in various ways.
21. V14—"For God may speak in one way, or in another, yet man does not perceive it"—that is, God speaks to man in various ways.
22. V15—"In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls upon men, while slumbering on their beds."
23. This was one way God spoke to man in times past—through dreams and visions while they slept on their beds.
24. V16—"Then He opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction"—He enables them to understand the dreams and visions.
25. V7—"In order to turn man from his deed, and conceal pride from man, He keeps back his soul from the Pit, and his life from perishing by the sword."
26. In other words, God spoke to man through dreams and visions, giving him instruction and guidance, keeping him from destruction.
27. Again, by "Pit" is meant "destruction" in general and the grave or death in particular (which is symbolized by the sword).
28. The point being—God speaks to man in order to instruct him and turn him from foolish and proud deeds.

III. The Second Way God Speaks (vv19-22)

1. In this section, Elihu not only intends to provide a second way God speaks to man, but to also correct the faulty teaching of Job's friends.
2. If you recall, his three friends taught that God brings suffering and affliction only upon sinners and hypocrites.
3. Elihu corrects that by asserting God actually uses suffering and affliction as a means of chastening and correcting man.
4. V19—"Man is also chastened with pain on his bed, and with strong pain in many of his bones, so that his life abhors bread, and his soul succulent food."
5. This refers to various sicknesses and diseases God brings upon people as a means to chasten and correct them.
6. V21—"His flesh wastes away from sight, and his bones stick out which once were not seen"—the are the effects of his sickness and disease.
7. V22—"Yes, his soul draws near the Pit, and his life to the executioners"—again by Pit is meant the grave and death.
8. The word rendered "executioners" literally means "destroyers" or "those who bring death" and likely simply refers to death itself.

IV. The Third Way God Speaks (vv23-30)

1. In this section, Elihu provides a third way in God speaks to man, to deliver him from the Pit and that's a messenger.
2. Notice three things within this blessed section—a messenger (vv23-24), the redeemed (vv25-27), and a redemption (vv28-30).
3. (1) A messenger (vv23-24), v23—"If there is a messenger for him, a mediator, one among a thousand, to show man His uprightness."

4. By "messenger" and "mediator" Elihu refers to someone who would speak to Job on the behalf of God.
5. This is what a messenger is—he speaks to others on behalf of someone else—the NAS renders it "angel" which simply means messenger.
6. But notice, this messenger is also a mediator—a mediator is someone who mediates between two parties.
7. But the word rendered "mediator" is a more generic word that literally refers to speaking and especially interpreting.
8. It's for this reason the KJV renders the term "interpreter"—an interpreter mediates as he explains things to another.
9. This is really the idea here—a messenger is a person who gives a message that he then interprets or explains.
10. Elihu describes this interpreter or mediator as "one among a thousand" to underscore the rarity of such people.
11. In the first place, Elihu is referring to himself as the messenger and mediator, sent by God to correct Job.
12. Through his message and mediation, God will be gracious toward Job, and deliver him from the Pit.
13. V24—"Then He is gracious to him, and says, 'Deliver him from going down to the Pit; I have found a ransom.'"
14. By the Pit is meant the grave—God graciously uses his messenger to show man His uprightness (that is God's uprightness, or else, "what is right for man").
15. The result of this will be a deliverance or redemption from death (Pit)—God will rescue him from the grave.
16. Now, here I need to remind you of the concept of redemption—the idea of redemption is found throughout this passage.
17. To redeem simply means "to deliver at a price"—thus, for there to be redemption two things are needed: a need for deliverance and a price given.
18. V24 speaks of both—"Deliver him from going down to the Pit; I have found a ransom"—deliver him from the grave (death) for I have found a ransom.
19. Now, the person speaking in v24 is obviously God (He is the Redeemer), and the person redeemed (delivered) is Job, but what is the ransom?
20. Well, a ransom is the cause of the deliverance—it's the reason why God graciously delivers a person from harm.
21. Thus, in the ultimate and final sense, the only ransom that pays for our deliverance is that of Jesus Christ.
22. But this concerns a deliverance from hell and not merely the grave—thus, the question remains, what is meant by ransom in the more immediate sense?
23. Well, to be honest there isn't any way to know with certainty—some have suggested the mediation of the messenger; others have suggested that by ransom is meant the repentance of the redeemed (v27).
24. It's likely best to leave it undetermined, as the text doesn't say what the ransom actually is (though, as I've said, it ultimately refers to Christ).
25. (2) A redemption (vv25-27)—within these verses, Elihu says three things will be true of Job after he's delivered.
26. (a) His health will return, v25—"His flesh shall be young like a child's, he shall return to the days of his youth."
27. (b) His joy will be restored, v26—"He shall pray to God, and He will delight in him, he shall see His face with joy, for He restores to man His righteousness."

28. (c) His sins will be confessed, v27—"Then he looks at men and says, 'I have sinned, and perverted what was right, and it did not profit me.'"
29. Verses 28-30 are a summary of redemption (a theme he's been alluding to throughout the particular section).
30. Let me begin by defining some of these terms—by "redeem" is meant deliver, by "soul" is meant life, and by "Pit" is meant grave.
31. Instead of Job going down to the Pit and darkness, he is delivered from death and sees the light of life (v30).
32. V29—"Behold, God works all these things, twice, in fact, three times with a man, to bring back his soul from the Pit, that he may be enlightened with the light of life."
33. That is, these are the three ways in which God uses to get man's attention and deliver him from the Pit.

V. A Closing Exhortation (vv31-33)

1. In this final section, Elihu ends in a similar way he began, with an exhortation for Job to listen to his words.
2. V31—"Give ear, Job, listen to me; hold your peace, and I will speak. If you have anything to say answer me; speak, for I desire to justify you."
3. That is, he would defend Job from his harsh statements he made against God, if Job could defend himself.
4. V33—"If not, listen to me; hold your peace, and I will teach you wisdom"—in other words—"If you are not able to give a proper defense of your words, then just be quiet and let me teach you wisdom."
5. And thus, we learn, that Elihu is very unlike Job's friends, as it appears he actually desires to help Job.

VI. A Summary Lessons

1. Here I want to close by summarizing this chapter into a single lesson—God speaks to man in a number of ways.
2. V14—"For God may speak in one way, or in another, yet man does not perceive it"—that is, by nature he doesn't see or hear it.
3. But the fact that man doesn't perceive or hear God, doesn't mean God is not present, nor that God does not speak.
4. In fact, Elihu provide three broad ways in which God speaks to man—directly, providentially, and Scripturally.
5. (1) Directly—by this I mean, God spoke to man directly through dreams and visions, v15—"In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls upon men."
6. This was a common way God spoke to man in olden days—He spoke to him directly through dreams and visions.
7. Now, let me clarify, this manner of revelation was relatively rare, as God didn't speak to every man this way.
8. But He did, all the way up through the apostolic age, speak to man in this way—through dreams and visions.
9. Does God speak to man today through dreams and visions—well, yes and no—yes, because the Bible records many of these drams and visions, and no, because these former ways of revelation have ceased.
10. Heb.1:1—"God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son."

11. (2) Providentially—by this I mean, God speaks to man through various providences such as sickness and affliction.
12. Now, here of course I don't mean that God literally speaks to us through such providences and affliction.
13. But He brings things upon us in order to get our attention and teach us important and necessary lessons.
14. (3) Scripturally—by this I mean, God tells man of redemption through messengers who explain Scripture (Mal.3:1; Rom.10:14-15).
15. In fact, within vv23-30 especially, I suggest we have a tremendous description of gospel redemption (let me in closing suggest 5 things about it).
16. (a) Its need—as I have said, the Hebrew word rendered "Pit" literally means "destruction" and can refer to the grave (a place of physical destruction) or hell (a place of spiritual and eternal destruction).
17. Isa.38:17—"You have lovingly delivered my soul from the pit of corruption, for You have cast all my sins behind Your back."
18. This is the best way to understand v18 and v22 where the "sword" and "executioners" follow the Pit.
19. Ultimately speaking, these refer to the angels (executioners) and God's just and penal judgment (sword).
20. Man is in need of deliverance—he needs to be rescued or delivered from the Pit of everlasting destruction.
21. (b) Its cost, v24—"Then He is gracious to him, and says, 'Deliver him from going down to the Pit; I have found a ransom.'"
22. 1Tim.2:5-6—"For thee is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."
23. (c) Its cause—the cause of our redemption is found in the first part of v24—"Then He is gracious to him."
24. Here's the underlining cause of gospel redemption—the unmerited favor, kindness, and love of God.
25. As we read through this chapter, the last thing we learn is that man is in any way worthy or deserving of redemption.
26. (d) Its results—the results of this redemption are ultimately deliverance from physical and eternal death.
27. One of the biggest interpretive difficulties within this chapter, is properly understanding several pronouns.
28. V26—"He shall pray to God, and He will delight in him, He shall see His face with joy, for He restores to man His righteousness."
29. The problem is, the Hebrew language (as well as the Greek), don't capitalize pronouns as English does.
30. Isa.35:9-10—"No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast go up on it; it shall not be found there. But the redeemed shall walk there, and the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."
31. (e) Its evidence—by this I mean, what evidence can a man have on earth that he has been truly redeemed?
32. V27—"Then he looks at men and says, 'I have sinned, and perverted what was right, and it did not profit me.'"
33. This is an earthly evidence in that it takes place on earth and before the eyes of men—it's called repentance.

CHS—"In the days of Elihu, however, dreams were much more frequently the way in which God spake, for there were few messengers from God to interpret His mind, no openly declared gospel, and few assemblies for instruction by hearing the word; and what is more, there was then no written word of God. In those early times they had no inspired books at all, so that, lacking the Bible, and lacking the frequent ministrations of God's servants, the Lord was pleased to supply their deficiencies by speaking to men in the visions of the night. I say again, we must not expect the Lord to return to the general use of so feeble an agency now that He employs others which are far more effectual. It is much more profitable for you to have the word in your houses which you can read at all times, and to have God's ministers to proclaim clearly the gospel of Jesus, than it would be to be dependent upon visions of the night."

Romans 10:14-15—"How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!'"

Mal.3:1—"Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,' Says the LORD of hosts."

2Peter 1:19-21—"And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; 20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit."