



CHAPTER 36:24 – 37:24

Introduction

Elihu presents Job with a choice. You find it in verse twenty-four of chapter thirty-seven when he says,

Job 37:24 "Therefore men fear Him; He shows no partiality to any who are wise of heart."

The choice is between these two: Job can either "fear" God, or he can be "wise of heart."

»»What does it mean to "fear" God? It means that you submit yourself to God's will for your life out of respect and reverence. Solomon said, in Ecclesiastes 12:13,

Ecclesiastes 12:13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all.

There you have it: You submit to God - - you "keep His commandments" - - out of a reverent and respectful "fear." When you fear God, submitting to His will, you are acknowledging His wisdom is superior to your own in running your life.

»»That is what it means to fear God, and that was one of Job's choices. His other choice was to be "wise of heart." What does it mean to be "wise of heart?" It means you seek your *own* wisdom rather than submitting yourself to God's wisdom.

The conclusion of Elihu's counsel was to encourage Job to submit himself to the wisdom of God in allowing his suffering. To emphasize to Job that he should submit to God's wisdom, Elihu used

an illustration from nature. He appealed to the seasons of the year, hoping to show Job the infinite wisdom of God in creation. The cycle of the seasons - - fall, winter, spring, and summer - - are a marvel of design. They exhibit, for all to see, the wisdom of an Almighty God.

That being obvious to any observer, Elihu applies it to Job. If God's wisdom can be seen in His seasons, how much *more* must His wisdom be at work in the various "seasons" of your life! After all, God's creation is merely a backdrop for His real work: Making you into the image of His Son, Jesus Christ. The seasons of the year are not as important to God as the "seasons" of your life!

You might be going through the *ruin* of fall... the *ravages* of winter... the *renewal* of spring... or the *rest* of summer. Whatever season you find yourself in, it is a marvel of God's design, showing His infinite wisdom.

We'll see two things in our study of these verses:

#1 God's Wisdom Is Shown
As You Survey His Seasons

#2 God's Wisdom Is Known
As You Submit To Your Seasons

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#1 God's Wisdom Is Shown
As You Survey His Seasons
(36:24-37:18)

Elihu appeals to Job to consider creation. The fact that this approach to Job's personal suffering seems strange to us is itself instructive. We have a tendency toward self. The best selling Christian books are books that are essentially self-centered, or man-centered. They emphasize personal experience, self-image and self-esteem, inter-personal relationships, and what Jesus can do to meet our needs. These have their place in the Christian life, but they should not take the place of the glory and the majesty of God and His eternal purposes.

Elihu wants Job to look away from himself and toward God - - the God of creation.

Job 36:24 "Remember to magnify His work, Of which men have sung.

Job 36:25 Everyone has seen it; Man looks on it from afar.

Job 36:26 "Behold, God is great, and we do not know Him; Nor can the number of His years be discovered.

The "work" of God that "everyone has seen" is creation. Mankind has a tendency to "look on it from afar" - - to ignore its importance. It seems like a distant doctrine that is of no help in times of personal suffering and struggle. Quite the opposite is true! When we suffer or struggle we need to remember that "God is great." When Elihu says "we do not know Him," he explains what he means by saying "nor can the number of His years be discovered." In other words, God is greater than any suffering, greater than any struggle, One Whose resources cannot be exhausted by our need.

Since creation is a big subject, Elihu narrows it down to a consideration of the seasons. He discusses fall from verse twenty-seven through verse five of chapter thirty-seven. Then he follows with a brief discussion of winter, spring, and summer.

►► Fall:

Job 36:27 For He draws up drops of water, Which distill as rain from the mist,

Job 36:28 Which the clouds drop down And pour abundantly on man.

Job 36:29 Indeed, can anyone understand the spreading of clouds, The thunder from His canopy?

Job 36:30 Look, He scatters his light upon it, And covers the depths of the sea.

In the East, after the heat and drought of summer, both the land and the people welcomed the autumn rains. Elihu had a deep insight into the "water cycle" of nature - - evaporation, condensation, and precipitation - - and of the need for the electricity of lightning to help this "system" work.

With the mind of a scientist but the heart of a poet, Elihu described the storm. The clouds form; lightning releases its power; there is the sound of thunder.

The fall storm illustrates both God's sovereignty and His goodness:

Job 36:31 For by these He judges the peoples; He gives food in abundance.
Job 36:32 He covers His hands with lightning, And commands it to strike.
Job 36:33 His thunder declares it, The cattle also, concerning the rising storm.

God controls these cycles for good. How much more, then, does He control the circumstances of your life - - even though you might be in a fall season?

Job 37:1 "At this also my heart trembles, And leaps from its place.
Job 37:2 Hear attentively the thunder of His voice, And the rumbling that comes from His mouth.
Job 37:3 He sends it forth under the whole heaven, His lightning to the ends of the earth.
Job 37:4 After it a voice roars; He thunders with His majestic voice, And He does not restrain them when His voice is heard.
Job 37:5 God thunders marvelously with His voice; He does great things which we cannot comprehend.

Your observations of God's wisdom in His use of power in nature ought to inspire you to believe He is wise in running your life. How tragic, then, that we teach our children that "nature" is a neutral, evolutionary force that has no real value apart from how it can be harnessed to help us. No wonder we wonder about our circumstances: We have lost sight of the wisdom of God.

►►Winter:

Job 37:6 For He says to the snow, 'Fall on the earth'; Likewise to the gentle rain and the heavy rain of His strength.
Job 37:7 He seals the hand of every man, That all men may know His work.
Job 37:8 The beasts go into dens, And remain in their lairs.
Job 37:9 From the chamber of the south comes the whirlwind, And cold from the scattering winds of the north.
Job 37:10 By the breath of God ice is given, And the broad waters are frozen.

At some point, the fall rains become the winter ice and snow. Isaac Watts wrote,

There's not a plant or flower below
But makes Thy glories known;
And clouds arise and tempests blow
By order from Thy throne

Winter is normally a time of reduced activity. When Elihu says "He seals the hand of every man," he means that the laborer must cease his work due to the weather - - just as animals hibernate or otherwise grow inactive. We have overcome much inactivity through

technology, which gives us less time to meditate upon God in the winter.

Again, remember Elihu's overall point:

Your observations of God's wisdom in His use of power in nature ought to inspire you to believe He is wise in running your life - even when you are experiencing a winter season.

►► Spring:

Job 37:11 Also with moisture He saturates the thick clouds; He scatters His bright clouds.

Job 37:12 And they swirl about, being turned by His guidance, That they may do whatever He commands them On the face of the whole earth.

Job 37:13 He causes it to come, Whether for correction, Or for His land, Or for mercy.

Eventually the warmer winds start to blow, the snow and ice melt, and the rain clouds appear once again. Elihu tells you that God uses the weather for His purposes: It can bring correction, or mercy, or it can simply be the outworking of the natural processes He set in motion in creation with no "hidden" purpose.

This is another subtle hint for Job:

If God uses the weather during His seasons to accomplish His purposes for people, how much more does He use the circumstances of the seasons of your life to accomplish His purposes for you.

►► Summer:

Job 37:14 "Listen to this, O Job; Stand still and consider the wondrous works of God.

Job 37:15 Do you know when God dispatches them, And causes the light of His cloud to shine?

Job 37:16 Do you know how the clouds are balanced, Those wondrous works of Him who is perfect in knowledge?

Job 37:17 Why are your garments hot, When He quiets the earth by the south wind?

Job 37:18 With Him, have you spread out the skies, Strong as a cast metal mirror?

Now the clouds are "balanced"; the NIV says they "hang poised." Everything is still. The summer sun heats the air, the south wind blows from the desert, and the people start to swelter in their clothes.

Fall, winter, spring, and summer. They always follow in that order. I know that sounds silly... but it's really a tremendous encouragement! God's order in creation is something we count upon,

depend upon. At the same time, His order throws us off: We have El Nino, La Nina, and other phenomena to deal with. But these are always within the context of an orderly process of nature.

The same is true of your life! Things come that throw you off; but they are always within the context of God's orderly purposes for you.

#2 God's Wisdom Is Known As You Submit To Your Seasons (37:19-24)

God must also be wise in the seasons He brings into your life. He cannot be other than wise! You may as well submit to God in the seasons He brings into your life.

Job 37:19 "Teach us what we should say to Him, For we can prepare nothing because of the darkness.

Job had been "preparing" a case to bring before God in the courtroom of heaven. Compared to the wisdom and knowledge of God, we are in "darkness." There is nothing we would have to say if we saw God as He truly is! The sight of Him would take your breath away, silence you, humble you. It is only when we become self-centered that we have such ideas.

Job 37:20 Should He be told that I wish to speak? If a man were to speak, surely he would be swallowed up.

Job 37:21 Even now men cannot look at the light when it is bright in the skies, When the wind has passed and cleared them.

Job 37:22 He comes from the north as golden splendor; With God is awesome majesty.

If you can't stare directly at the sun in a cloudless sky, then you certainly can't stare directly at God! Job had forgotten to submit to the wisdom of God and was seeking his own wisdom.

Job 37:23 As for the Almighty, we cannot find Him; He is excellent in power, In judgment and abundant justice; He does not oppress.

When Elihu says of God, "we cannot find Him," he means that God is greater than man. He is mighty in His power, but His use of power is not arbitrary; it is "excellent" - - purposeful and loving and good. He is perfect in justice and judgment; He does not oppress.

These are things that are overlooked when you seek your own wisdom. You are to rather submit to the wisdom of God in His dealings with you.

Here is a very simple way of summarizing what Elihu is saying:
Who do you want to run your life? You? Or God?

The more you question God and complain and confront and contend - - the more you can be sure that you are wanting to run your life!

If you want God to run your life, then you must submit to His wisdom in allowing various seasons. No one likes the *ruin* of fall... the *ravages* of winter... You love the *renewal* of spring... and the *rest* of summer. All of these are necessary in their own order for God to complete the good work He has begun in you.

If you suffer and struggle as a righteous person - - *not* because of your own sin or sowing to the flesh - - then submit to it as God's wisdom for your life.

Conclusion

Submitting yourself to God is the simple key to the Christian life, whether you are suffering or not. God can be trusted to run your life, even when you feel as though He is ruining it, or allowing it to be ruined.