

From Where Does Wisdom Come?

Job's friends possessed great knowledge, and their many years meant much experience. But were they really wise? During his final defense, Job spends some time contemplating wisdom, and more importantly the source of wisdom. Job discusses some of man's great accomplishments, findings, and advancements. Mankind is often proud of collective wisdom and technological advancement. Further, man frequently uses learning to amass new wealth. Job discusses man's ability to find and invent ways to uncover precious things like iron, copper, sapphires, and gold. Then Job asks the penetrating questions, *"But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?"* Throughout the ages, man has always tended to rely on his own accomplishments and understanding. As man's knowledge increases, so too does his ego and often his rebellion. Ironically, as man grows "smarter," he often becomes more foolish. As man amasses wealth, he becomes spiritually bankrupt. Job's conclusions are important; wisdom outweighs all the wealth the world can offer. Further, his final statement is, *"Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding."* You don't have to hold a PhD to be wise, and you don't have to be rich to be wealthy. If you learn to fear and respect God and His will; if you obey His word by turning away from evil; then you can grasp true wisdom! Wisdom is not for the intellectual, it is for the humble and obedient.



"That You May Grow Thereby..."

A weekly Bible reading plan



Job 25-34

"From Where Does Wisdom Come?"

Overview

Chapters 25 and 26 conclude the dialogue between Job and his three friends; Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. The discussion ends in a stalemate—the friend's speeches get shorter and shorter (Bildad's final speech is only six verses and Zophar doesn't even speak a third time). Job remains unconvinced that he is guilty, and the friends are unconvinced that Job is innocent. Job's frustration is evident as he summarizes his situation in chapters 27-31. Job maintains his innocence. He has sought wisdom by following God, yet his fortunes have been turned upside down (ch. 29-30). Job catalogues his righteousness (ch. 31) and pleads one more time for the cause of his misfortune to be made known. Following this, a new character, Elihu, is introduced in chapter 32. Elihu is a much younger man that has apparently been present for the discussion, but has been silent up until this point. This unknown and mysterious character becomes a central part of the book of Job, as his four speeches take up chapters 32-37. Our reading this week will take us through the introduction of Elihu, and the first half of his speeches.

Suggested Reading Schedule

Monday: Job 25-26

Tuesday: Job 27-28

Wednesday: 29-30

Thursday: Job 31-32

Friday: Job 33-34

Like last week, instead of answering questions, we are going to try and determine the meaning of the dialogue as it progresses. As you read (and reread) the various passages this week, try to understand and summarize the primary arguments. Below is a brief outline to help get started!

- ◆ Chapter 25: Bildad's final argument
- ◆ Chapters 26-27: Job's response
- ◆ Chapter 28: Job contemplates wisdom
- ◆ Chapters 29-31: Job's final remarks and appeal
- ◆ Chapter 31: Elihu's first speech-concerning Job's friends
- ◆ Chapter 32: Elihu's second speech-concerning Job

Who is Elihu?

In Job 32, the mysterious Elihu is introduced. This character throws us off for a number of reasons. First, he isn't mentioned prior to chapter 32 at all, so he just "appears" on the scene. His speech makes it sound as if he has been present for the discussion thus far, so why he is unnamed before is unknown. Secondly, after he concludes his speeches, nothing more is said of him. In the final chapters God speaks with Job and rebukes Job's three friends, but He says nothing about Elihu. Third, Elihu is the only one that speaks for a prolonged period of time, and the only one whom Job doesn't reply to at all. Lastly, what should we think of what Elihu says? Commentators are divided on how to view Elihu. Some praise him as a speaker of great truth, while others think Elihu is as mistaken as Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar; and possibly even more arrogant! So which is it? As you read this week, try to determine for yourself what this man contributes to the story of Job. What is that Elihu is saying? Why do you think he is right or wrong?

Are We Just Worms?

Bildad's final response (ch. 25) seems to be a last retort sputtered in exasperation, if not outright anger. Once more, we see in Bildad's argument the danger of incomplete theology. What Bildad says in these six short verses is not completely devoid of truth. He is right to recognize God's greatness and supremacy, and he is correct in understanding man to be greatly inferior to God. He asks the question, "How then can man be in the right before God? How can he who is born of woman be pure?" (v. 4) He then concludes by likening mankind to maggots and worms. Bildad's mistake is that he stops short, and thus his message is one of hopelessness. Thankfully, God does not view mankind as maggots and worms. God created man in His image, and loves man enough to make a way to save him. This is not a reason for us to boast, but it is a reason for us to rejoice. It should cause us to thank God and praise Him for His love, grace, and mercy. It is interesting that in the two other Old Testament books where man is likened to a worm, there is a connection with redemption. Psalm 22:6 is a Messianic prophecy foretelling of Jesus' sacrifice. In Isaiah 41:14 God calls Israel "you worm of Jacob," but then declares Himself to be Israel's helper and Redeemer! Bildad focused on man's worthlessness, not on God's redemptive care. This was just one more reason he was a "miserable comforter." It is not enough to preach to others about their sin—we must also tell them the good news that there is a way to be reconciled to God!

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