Elihu’s Second Speech—He Proclaims God’s Justice
God is Always Right—He is Never Wrong

Introduction:

In this chapter Elihu continues to answer Job’s claims and complaints in a second “sermon” or speech. In this chapter the main focus of Elihu’s discourse is the Defense of God’s Justice. God, because He is the Creator of all things, is by definition Holy and therefore always right—never wrong!

Elihu continues to have a humble attitude, and invites the elderly Job and the three older friends to reason together and come to a consensus regarding Job’s situation.

Again, as in his first discourse, Elihu quotes Job to establish the fact that he’s not making up false or “straw man” arguments against Job. He cites three claims of innocence and three complaints against God’s (apparent) injustice.

Elihu simply states that it would be unholy for God to act in a wicked manner, pervert justice or commit iniquity—that is, God would never act contrary to His Holy and Divine nature.

Using two crucial rhetorical questions, “Who gave Him charge over the earth?” and “Who appointed Him over the whole world?”, Elihu reminds us that God is de facto the Master (i.e., Lord) over all that He’s created—including the people living in the world. He also reminds us that God has the power to, in a moment, cause all those who are living to perish—if He were so to choose.

vv. 1-4 ➤ Elihu invites an honest evaluation of what has been said

[1 Elihu further answered and said: “Hear my words, you wise men; give ear to me, you who have knowledge. 3 For the ear tests words as the palate tastes food. 4 Let us choose justice for ourselves; let us know among ourselves what is good.”]

[For the ear tests words as the palate tastes food] This is exactly what Job had said earlier [Job 12:11], which indicates that this phrase was perhaps a Middle Eastern saying which was in common usage during that time.

The meaning is clear: just as one can taste food to determine if it’s good or bad, so the ears can “test” words to see whether or not they are reasonable, if they are coherent and logical—do the words make sense?

Elihu’s point is that since he had listened carefully and attentively [Job 32:11-12] to all the words spoken by Job [and his three friends], he could test those words to see how much sense they made. Elihu is claiming he has ‘earned’ the right to credibly respond to Job’s claims and complaints.

[Let us choose justice for ourselves.....] In other words, Elihu is asking everyone to be honest with themselves and each other. The Hebrew word rendered “justice” here [sometimes “judgment”] means a “verdict”.

1 And God has actually done that with a world-wide flood [ref. Gen. 6:1-8] in which only eight people were saved because of their faith in God.
Elihu is asking for everyone to come to the same final *verdict* or *judgment*—a consensus.

[.....*let us know among ourselves what is good*] That is what Elihu means by “what is good”, i.e., which things make sense, opposed to which things are foolish [by extension, “what is bad”].

Only God is good {**Matt. 19:16-17**}. For Elihu the implicit standard by which to compare the statements and opinions that have been made is God’s holiness—His *unique* power, glory and authority.

In other words, Elihu is asking everyone to *evaluate* the statements that have been made and *examine* the evidence in light of divine Truth. His goal, I think, is to help everyone see which statements and what evidence can survive the scrutiny of a close investigation to God’s standard of “right and wrong”; “good and evil”.

Elihu’s desire is that amidst the conflicting opinions and the sentiments which have been put forth, let’s put aside our own personal preferences and biases and choose to *rightly understand* and come to a single, unified verdict.

---

**Application**: Elihu’s request is really a reminder and admonition for all believers and those who seek to follow God. We are told by the Psalmist:

“How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word.”—**Ps. 119:9**

In midst of national and personal suffering because of the consequences of sin, after God uses the Babylonians to judge His people with destruction and captivity, the prophet Jeremiah exclaims:

“Let us search out and examine our ways and turn back to the Lord; let us lift our hearts and hands to God in Heaven.”—**Lam. 3:40-41**

The apostle Paul exhorts the carnal Christians at Corinth to:

“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified. But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified.”—**2 Cor. 13:5-6**

To the churches in Galatia [modern Turkey] Paul writes:

“For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For each one shall bear his own load.”—**Gal. 6:3-5**

And the writer of Hebrews tells us:

“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”—**Heb. 4:12-13**

---

Elihu knows that the words that proceed from a person’s mouth come from the heart and can be evaluated to indicate the state of one’s soul. Jesus puts it this way:

“Don’t you understand that whatever goes into the mouth enters the stomach and then passes out into the toilet? But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these things defile a person.”—**Matt. 15:17-19**
v. 5-9  **Elihu Echoes Job’s Prideful Words & Exposes Job’s Faltering Faith**

[5 “For Job has said, ‘I am righteous, but God has taken away my justice; 6 should I lie concerning my right? My wound is incurable, though I am without transgression’. 7 What man is like Job, who drinks scorn like water, 8 who goes in company with the workers of iniquity, and walks with wicked men? 9 For he has said, ‘It profits a man nothing that he should delight in God’.”]

As in his first speech, Elihu now repeats, verbatim, words that Job has previously spoken and they come back to “haunt” him. He quotes both Job’s claims of innocence and complaints of injustice. Refer to Table 34-1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job’s Claims of Innocence</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I am righteous” [i.e., innocent]</td>
<td>Job 9:15, 20; 27:6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I am right” [I’m not lying about it]</td>
<td>Job 27:5-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I am without transgression” [i.e., without rebellion]</td>
<td>Job 10:7; Job 31 context</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job’s Complaints of Injustice</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“God has taken away my justice”</td>
<td>Job 19:6-7; 27:2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“my wound is incurable” [lit., the arrow causing the wound]</td>
<td>Job 6:4; 16:13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It profits a man nothing that he should delight in God”</td>
<td>Job 21:15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Elihu is trying to show Job that his words betray an attitude of *spiritual rebellion*—he is thinking and acting like those who have rejected God’s authority in their lives. It’s as though Job’s “fear of the LORD” is gone.

In other words, Elihu is making a serious allegation that Job is identifying himself with the “wicked” [a morally wrong person].

He wants Job to see, from his own words, that he is not behaving in an upright manner but more in the manner of a wicked person. In other words, he is saying to Job that his words indicate that he no longer thinks it’s beneficial to *delight* in the LORD God Almighty, i.e., to be obedient in worshiping and serving Him.

Elihu’s point is that Job is acting contrary to the *man of God* that the Psalmist David describes:

> “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper. The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish”.—**Ps. 1:1-6**
What man is like Job.....] Elihu makes it very personal, who does Job really think he is by making such claims and complaints, all the while thinking that God owes him something. Is Job the only man struggling with such calamities?

Elihu now makes three negative associations based on Job’s words—they put Job in a very bad light. Job needs to seriously consider the consequences of his words!

[.....who drinks scorn like water.....] First, Elihu says that Job drinks up “scorn” like water. The Hebrew word “scorn” means to scoff at someone or something, to hold someone or something in derision.

[.....who goes in company with the workers of iniquity.....] Second, Elihu shockingly says that Job is acting like he’s keeping company with those who practice iniquity, i.e., willful disobedience to God and proactively living an immoral lifestyle.

[.....and walks with wicked men?] Third, in conclusion, Elihu comes right out and says to Job, Job, you’re acting as if your closest associates are wicked men and you’re thinking and acting like them!

The primary reason for Elihu concluding this is the fact that Job has come out and said, “It profits a man nothing that he should delight in God”; which is what a wicked person would say.

What an indictment of Job! But it’s what he needs to hear and Elihu knows it. He is not talking in the third person, ‘beating around the bush’, making veiled references to Job, like the three other friends, hoping that Job will associate himself with the allegations.

Elihu comes right out and, unashamedly and directly, says these things to Job. He is pulling no punches and in reality, he’s acting like a true friend. Note:

“Open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed. Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.”—Prov. 27:5-6

How should Job have handled his suffering? Perhaps Job should have prayed something similar to the prayer of King David:

“LORD, I cry out to You; make haste to me! Give ear to my voice when I cry out to You. Let my prayer be set before You as incense, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice. Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips. Set the righteous strike me; it shall be a kindness. And let him rebuke me; it shall be as excellent oil; let my head not refuse it. For still my prayer is against the deeds of the wicked.”—Ps. 141:1-5

It is interesting to note that Job does not answer Elihu’s allegations—how can he, they are based upon Job’s own words!

Perhaps Job is already realizing how wrong he has been for his “head is not refusing” the rebuke and perhaps he is beginning to see that Elihu’s “striking words” are a kindness.

---

2 I do not believe that Elihu means to say that Job is actually keeping “company with the workers of iniquity” or “walks with wicked men” because Job has not had the time or opportunity to do that.
vv. 10-15  Elihu Defends God’s Justice

[10 “Therefore listen to me, you men of understanding: far be it from God to do wickedness, and from the Almighty to commit iniquity. 11 For He repays man according to his work, and makes man to find a reward according to his way. 12 Surely God will never do wickedly, nor will the Almighty pervert justice. 13 Who gave Him charge over the earth? Or who appointed Him over the whole world? 14 If He should set His heart on it, if He should gather to Himself His Spirit and His breath, 15 All flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust.”]

[Therefore listen to me…..] Elihu again exhorts his audience to listen to him.

[…..you men of understanding] Literally, “men of heart”. The Hebrew word for ‘heart’ is commonly used to signify a persons thought processes [in contrast to the brain or head].

Elihu is showing that he regards the older men with great respect for what they know. Because they are more than qualified to understand the discussion, the expectation is that they will not only comprehend but also appreciate the truth as it is laid out.

Elihu recounts the attributes of God with the intent to show that it is futile for a person to set themselves up in the place of God. So Elihu begins by stating a fundamental truth—

[far be it.....] Literally, “profane or unholy”. It would be an unholy and profane. What would be profane or unholy? Elihu tells us—

[.....for God to do wickedness and for the Almighty to commit iniquity] It should never even enter into a person’s thought process that God would do anything considered “wicked”; i.e., morally wrong; or that the Almighty [God] would commit “iniquity” [in any way].

Such an idea is perverted, it is profane and unholy so don’t even think it, let alone say it. And yet Job had done so {} even though Job would probably have agreed.

Therefore, Elihu defends the justice of God, affirming that God, because He is holy, cannot sin. he cannot do anything wicked nor commit an evil act. Bildad had actually done this earlier by asking similar rhetorical questions about God {see Job 8:3}.

Elihu mentions several examples to support the fact that God is uncompromising in justice. These include:

(1) Since God alone is holy, for Him to act in a wicked way or commit iniquity would be inconsistent with His character of holiness and therefore unthinkable. Therefore, God can be counted on to be “just”.

(2) As Supreme Judge of justice, God gives a person what he deserves, meting out punishment for sin or blessing for obedience.

(3) As LORD, having sovereign authority over the Universe, no one could influence Him to pervert justice. No one can legitimately question His actions—He does what He wills with justice.

(4) As the Creator of human life God, if He wished, could withdraw His Spirit and the breath He’s given to every person and everyone would die at once and their bodies would decay and return to the ground. God is just because He has not done this3.

3 Even at the time of the Great Flood, Noah [and his family] found “grace” in the eyes of God and eight souls were spared so that not all “breath” perished.
For He repays man according to his work.....] God does repay according to a person’s actions. A person will always reap what they’ve sown. The apostle Paul puts it this way:

“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.”—Gal. 6:7-9

God treats each person as he/she deserves, which is the essence of justice. The only exception to this is God’s grace—which “trumps” His justice! Note:

“Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”—Rom. 5:20-21

It has been said that the definition of grace is summarized by its acronym:

God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense

[....and makes man to find a reward according to his way] In other words, God is in control of every situation and He causes a person to receive the consequences [i.e., “a reward”] of their actions.

Although it sounds like Elihu is offering the same explanation of Job’s suffering as the other three friends did⁴, if we remember that Elihu is honestly seeking to justify Job’s suffering {Job 33:32} it suggest we should think otherwise.

I believe Elihu is simply expressing the idea that, “Ok Job, let’s assume you have not committed some horrible act of iniquity—the fact still remains that you are suffering for some valid reason [because God is just]. So there’s still a reason and a purpose for your suffering”.

Elihu now asks two rhetorical questions intended to remind everyone of the Sovereignty and Supremacy of God Almighty—He alone sets the “standards” and makes the “rules”.

[Who gave Him charge over the earth?] In other words, if God is the Designer and Creator of the Universe, who else could have given Him authority over earth? The answer is, “No one!”

This makes God “Holy” absolutely unique and to be feared and worshipped.

[Or who appointed Him over the whole world?] For emphasis, Elihu rephrases the question. In other words, who is greater than God if no one arranged for Him to rule over the people living on the earth. Again, the answer is, “No one”.

[If He should set His heart on it.....] To illustrate the absolute sovereignty of God, Elihu presents a hypothetical scenario.

[If He should gather to Himself His Spirit and His breath.....] Mankind has no claim on life, it is God who gave it in the first place! And since it was God who originally breathed into man and woman the “breath of life” and they became “living beings” {Gen. 2:7}, He has the power and authority to take it back again—if He so chooses.

King Solomon tells us that it is God who controls the spirit, i.e., the life, of man when he dies:

“Then the dust will return to the earth as it was and the spirit will return to God who gave it.”

—Eccl. 12:7

⁴ Namely, because God does repay a person according to their actions, that a person’s level suffering is commensurate with their degree of committing iniquity.
If God chose, He would have the power and right to destroy mankind—that which He created. The implication is: how then shall people complain of the loss of health, comforts, and friends, and presume to accuse God of being unjust?

Elihu’s point may be; that a person has no right to complain and blame God for the loss of health, property, or friends; since God has the power, if He chose to, He could easily destroy all mankind—but because God is patient and loving He chooses not too.

Note:

“Because Your loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise You. 4 Thus I will bless You while I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips.”—Ps. 63:3-5

“Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul and forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies, Who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s. The Lord executes righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed. He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the children of Israel. The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.”—Ps 103:1-14

Application: We see a dramatic example of God’s loving-kindness in the book of Jonah. God sent the prophet Jonah to the ancient city of Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, with a message giving the people a choice between repentance, leading to life, or rebellion leading to death and destruction. It was knowing about God’s loving-kindness that fueled Jonah’s desire not to go as instructed and he initially fled from his assignment.

But God got a hold of him and Jonah ended up in Nineveh giving the people God’s message. The people ended up choosing repentance and life. God, true to his Word, spared the city and people. But Jonah had wanted to see the people destroyed and he became greatly upset and angry and prayed to the Lord:

“Ah, LORD, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness, One who relents from doing harm. Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live!”—Jonah 4:2-3

vrs. 16-20 ➤ Through It All God Remains in Control

[16 “If you have understanding, hear this; listen to the sound of my words: 17 Should one who hates justice govern? Will you condemn Him who is most just? 18 Is it fitting to say to a king, ‘You are worthless’, and to nobles, ‘You are wicked’? 19 Yet He is not partial to princes, nor does He regard the rich more than the poor; for they are all the work of His hands. 20 In a moment they die, in the middle of the night; the people are shaken and pass away; the mighty are taken away without a hand.”]

[If you have understanding, hear this; listen to the sound of my words] For the third time in this speech, Elihu asks Job and his three friends if they have understanding. The implication is that if they do they will listen to the collective voice of his words [i.e., discourse].
Elihu asks three rhetorical questions to highlight evidences that God is just in His dealings with people.

[Should one who hates justice govern?] The Hebrew word rendered “govern” literally means “to wrap firmly”. In other words, if God hated to pronounce a verdict [“hates justice”], He would be “divided” against Himself and would not be able to influence people and manage events in the world—He would lack the control needed to absolutely fair and just!

[Will you condemn Him who is most just?] In other words, if God is absolutely righteous [i.e., just], then no one can declare him wrong, i.e., no one can call Him “wicked”. Especially not anyone or anything He created!

[Is it fitting to say to a king, ‘You are worthless’, and to nobles, ‘You are wicked’?] By asking this rhetorical question, Elihu is making the point that people often indulge in disrespectful thoughts and language about God which they would never consider nor tolerate in regards to an earthly ruler. Yet God is the Ruler [i.e., LORD] of the entire Universe and He mocked and scorned all the time!

The meaning is, since God is the “noble King” of the Universe and His power and authority is absolutely greater than any earthly ruler, what would give a person a legitimate right to mock and scorn Him? [e.g., Job 19:6-13]. Why would anyone even insinuate that He would act in a wicked manner? [e.g., Job 16:11].

[Yet He is not partial to princes [lit. rulers], nor does He regard the rich more than the poor.....] God remains impartial to those things humans are partial to—power, possessions, position and prestige.

The irony is that God has given all these things to rulers and the rich. So we can be assured that He is not impressed or influenced by those things and He still judges with righteousness.

The poor can take comfort in knowing that in God’s judgment they are on equal terms with the rich.

The obvious conclusion is that God can be trusted to be fair and just in all situations.

[.....for they are all the work of His hands] Everyone, whether rich or poor, irrespective of position, is equal before God because we are all the work of His hands.

[In a moment they die.....] We all die—death is no respecter of persons. This was actually a major point that Job had made early in his discourse [ref. Job 3:17-19].

[.....in the middle of the night; the people are shaken and pass away.....] This is a commentary on human frailty—we are all subject to be upset and taken in death at any hour of the day or night [cp. v.25]. Sometimes this comes as a “surprise”.

[.....the mighty are taken away without a hand] A sudden divine upheaval can happen even to those who are “mighty”; i.e., those who are the strongest and boldest {cp. v.24}.

In light of all these things, how, then, could Job say God is unfair?  God may have chosen to be “silent” towards Job, but that did not give Job the right to condemn Him [e.g., Job 19:7, 21-22; 30:20-22].

---

5 That is, what some call the “alpha male”.

Job Chapter 34 8  Klaus G. Schiessel  Copyright © October 2016
vv. 21-24➢ **GOD IS OMNIPRESENT & OMNISCIENT**

[21 “For His eyes are on the ways of man, and He sees all his steps. 22 There is no darkness nor shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves. 23 For He need not further consider a man, that he should go before God in judgment. 24 He breaks in pieces mighty men without inquiry and sets others in their place.”]

Elihu says that God does not wipe out man because His eyes are on his ways and He sees all their steps. In other words, despite the fact that God knows everything that is going on, He is patient, loving and kind. God will not act in a frivolous manner.

All areas of life are exposed to God—no one and nothing can evade His knowledge. This can be a negative or positive thing.

For those who are “wicked” [morally in rebellion against God] and desire to commit iniquity, it is a negative thing.

For those who are “righteous” [accounted by God because of faith] it is a positive thing. Note:

“O LORD, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O Lord, You know it altogether. You have hedged me behind and before and laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain it. Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me and Your right hand shall hold me. If I say, ‘Surely the darkness shall fall on me’, even the night shall be light about me; indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, but the night shines as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to You.”—Psalms 139:1-12

In the case of the wicked they cannot hide from God because nothing is hidden from Him; there is no dark corner a person can hide in; nor does the “shadow of death”; i.e., the deepest darkness, obscure their presence or conceal their whereabouts.

[For He need not further consider a man, that he should go before God in judgment] The Hebrew literally reads, “For not upon man will He put more that he should walk towards God for a verdict”.

Because God is All-Present [OMNIPRESENT] and All-Knowing [OMNISCIENT] He does not need to take additional time in collecting the facts in a case. Nor does God need to make a lengthy investigation of a case brought against Him in order to make a fair and impartial judgment.

The meaning is that when a person goes before God in judgment it should be understood that God is not constrained or limited in knowledge of the facts of a case as a human court is. Human judges and juries are sometimes deceived and make mistakes, but no such issue exists with God. Therefore, a speedy and just verdict is to be expected and is always assured.

This interpretation seems to be confirmed by the next phrase.

God can at once convict a person or acquit them, and decide the case in a moment without any danger of getting things wrong [as is sometimes the case with human courts]. Therefore, no one has a right to complain against Him!
[He breaks in pieces mighty men without inquiry and sets others in their place] God can spoil the plans of mighty men, without having doubts or second thoughts⁶ [“without inquiry”], and break their power into pieces.

God also sets up others who are lower or inferior in status to take their place. This is the message that the prophet Daniel gave King Nebuchadnezzar:

“This decision is by the decree of the watchers and the sentence by the word of the holy ones, in order that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will and sets over it the lowest of men.”—Dan. 4:17

vv. 25-30➤ god overthrows the wicked lest they dominate the people

[25 “Therefore He knows their works; he overthrows them in the night, and they are crushed. 26 He strikes them as wicked men in the open sight of others. 27 Because they turned back from Him, and would not consider any of His ways, 28 So that they caused the cry of the poor to come to Him; for He hears the cry of the afflicted. 29 When He gives quietness, who then can make trouble? And when He hides His face, who then can see Him, whether it is against a nation or a man alone?—30 That the hypocrite should not reign, lest the people be ensnared.”]

Since God sees and knows all things He can intervene at any moment to “overthrow” [lit., “to flip over”, “to reverse”] the works of the wicked and they are “crushed” [lit. “to crumble”, i.e., “broken into pieces”].

God does this “in the night”, perhaps an allusion to the fact that God oftentimes overthrows the wicked when they least expect it, or are unprepared for calamity.

In justice, God openly strikes the wicked down so that others can see it.

In this case Elihu defines the wicked person as one who has turned away from God [presumably from having followed Him at one time] and no longer accept God’s standards as guidance for their life.

Their wickedness is specifically identified as afflicting the poor, who cry out to God for help and He hears them!

Elihu now describes the condition of those to whom God imparts peace and rest. No one and nothing will be able to convict the person who has been favored by God.

[When He gives quietness.....] When God gives tranquility, i.e., peace and rest.

[.....who then can make trouble?] Since God is more powerful than an individual or nation, when He gives rest and peace who can make trouble? No one!

This is reminiscent of the attributes of Christ Jesus:

“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, ‘These things says He who is holy, He who is true, He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens’.”—Rev. 3:7-8

---

⁶ The idea seems to be that God acts in this capacity without having to carefully examine or investigate the situation, i.e., without any deliberation, because He knows everything perfectly.
**Application:** This is also a New Testament truth. The apostle Paul tells us that

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: ‘For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter’. Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”—Rom. 8:31-39

[And when He hides His face, who then can see Him.....] That is, when God decides to hide His face, which is a sign of disfavor, then no one is then able to see Him at work. No one would be able to experience Him.

[whether it is against a nation or a man alone?] This applies to both people collectively as a nation or an individual.

[That the hypocrite should not reign.....] The two Hebrew words rendered “hypocrite” literally mean “soiled man”; one who is soiled by sin. Elihu is probably describing the person {v.27} who has rebelled and turned back from following the LORD.

Elihu says that such a person should not expect to be promoted or advanced is oftentimes prevented from attaining to a position of authority by God.

[.....lest the people be ensnared] A “soiled man” is keep from power so that the people at large are not ensnared; i.e., caught in a trap.

vv. 31-33➤ **GOD’S JUSTICE IS INDEPENDENT OF MAN’S ACTIONS OR MOTIVES**

[31 “For has anyone said to God, ‘I have borne chastening; I will offend no more; 32 teach me what I do not see; if I have done iniquity, I will do no more’? 33 Should He repay it according to your terms, just because you disavow it? You must choose and not I; therefore speak what you know.”]

[For has anyone said to God.....] Elihu was astonished that anyone, let alone Job, would not seriously consider humbling himself, repenting and confessing sin [i.e., unknown sins of ‘omission’] after suffering in such a horrible way—yet believe in the sovereignty of God.

He now phrases his amazement in the form of a question to get Job to think about a possible “attitude adjustment” and his need to have a humble and repentant mindset.

My wife and I are “empty nesters”, after having raised four children, and it’s just the two of us living at home now. Even so, oftentimes ask each other, rather humorously, “Has ‘anyone’ picked up the mail?” Of course there are only two choices for “anyone”—her or me!

I believe that is the sense in which Elihu phrases his question—the implication is that Job has not said any of these things to God because he’s been too busy justifying himself [which is of course what angered Elihu in the first place! {Job 32:2}].

7 Quoted from Psalms 44:22.
What things? These things.................

[I have borne chastening.....] The word “chastening” is not in the Hebrew text, which simply reads, “I have borne.....” However, based on the things that Job has already said, Elihu is probably referring to bearing the discipline of God.

[.....I will offend no more] The Hebrew word rendered “offend” literally means “to wind tightly” and so is oftentimes rendered “to take a pledge” {e.g., Job 22:6; 24:3, 9}, in the sense of a “binding” contract. Figuratively, it can also mean to pervert something as “tie into a knot” or “twist”; in this case as offending God by one’s actions.

Elihu’s meaning is that people don’t usually make it a normal practice to humbly accept [i.e., agree with] the discipline of God, which would then lead them to the next logical step of repentance along with the desire not to sin [i.e., “offend not”] against Him anymore.

Actually the opposite is true—most people don’t even want God in their lives. Note:

As it is written: “There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one”—Rom. 3:10-12

But, after suffering for so long [months; Job 7:3; 29:2] and in such a horrible fashion, Job has never confessed, nor admitted, that he might have unknowingly sinned against God [even if he cannot specifically name the sin]. Why? Because Job has an unrepentant heart.

[.....teach me what I do not see.....] God, teach me [i.e., “point out”] what I don’t understand. Job had asked his fallible friends to point out where he was wrong {Job 6:24}; but he had not asked God to teach him to understand that he might have sinned in some way he was not aware of.

This is what Elihu was doing, Job’s friends had never challenged Job to do this because they had just assumed his guilt.

[.....if I have done iniquity.....] That is, if God reveals any iniquity in a person’s life.

Job had been tenaciously claiming his innocence. Perhaps he was afraid of what God might have revealed to him if he had asked God to teach him to understand his suffering.

[.....I will do no more] This is, promise not to sin anymore.

Job never had a chance to do this because he didn’t ask God to teach him, that is, search him and evaluate him to reveal what was in his heart.

This is what King David prayed:

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.”—Ps. 139:23-24

The point Elihu is making is that Job had never prayed for God to teach him to understand so that he could repent. On the contrary, Job was too busy justifying himself, too prideful in defending himself—until the LORD speaks!

---

8 This may be the “flip-side” to what the apostle Paul was talking about [keep offending so that God’s grace will keep coming] when he wrote: “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?”—Rom. 6:1-3

9 See for example Ps. 14:1-3; 53:1-3; Eccl. 7:20.
However, before we come down too hard on Job, we need to remember “except for the grace of God there go I” {ref. Gal. 6:1-2}. The point being that it is difficult for a person to admit their sin when pride gets in the way. Our heart can easily deceive us but scripture tells us:

“Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. ‘For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways’, says the Lord. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts’.”—Isa. 55:7-9

“The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings.”—Jer. 17:9-10

**[Should He repay it according to your terms, just because you disavow it?]** This is a difficult verse to render into English and the NKJV transliterates the meaning of the Hebrew words. As do other translations.

The NET version renders this as; “*Is it your opinion that He should recompense it, because you reject this?*”

The NASB renders this as; “*Shall He recompense on your terms, because you have rejected it?*”

The NIV renders this as; “*Should He then reward you on your terms when you refuse to repent?*”

The Hebrew simply reads mean “*If you reject will He recompense according to your thoughts?*”

However Elihu’s meaning is clear: should God mete out His justice on Job’s terms?

Of course not! Job’s terms were simply based on his [fallible] testimony that he is innocent of all wrong-doing. In other words, it is God’s word against Job’s and who’ll win that controversy?

Job never once stopped to consider that he may indeed be in need of repentance.

Evidently Elihu felt, and rightly so, that Job’s attitude was not only inappropriate but irrational as well because Job was trying to tell God what to do and how to do it. But Job is not in charge—God is!

The truth is, since we all come to God on His terms [“*For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*”; Rom. 3:22-24], God will not compromise His justice to accommodate man’s terms, especially in light of a non-repentant attitude.

**[You must choose and not I.....]** Elihu reminds Job that he must decide whether or not he wants to come to God on his own terms or God’s terms. It is a decision that Elihu cannot make for him—neither can anyone make that decision for anyone else.

**[.....therefore speak what you know]** That is, tell us what you think about all this.

Job did not have anything to say! Perhaps Elihu has hit the nail on the head.
Men of understanding say to me, wise men who listen to me: 35 ‘Job speaks without knowledge, his words are without prudence’. 36 Oh, that Job were tried to the utmost, because his answers are like those of wicked men! 37 For he adds rebellion to his sin; he claps his hands among us, and multiplies his words against God.”

Elihu asks Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, those who have knowledge, to agree with his “verdict” that:

“Job speaks without knowledge, his words are without prudence”

Zophar would definitely have agreed because earlier he had stated:

“But oh, that God would speak and open His lips against you, that He would show you the secrets of wisdom! For they would double your prudence. Know therefore that God exacts from you less than your iniquity deserves.”—Job 11:5-6

It is obvious that Elihu is still furious with Job {see Job 32:2}.

Being brutally honest, Elihu’s verdict concludes with his desire that Job gets his wish to be tried to the utmost, i.e., to Job’s goal of being tried in God’s court of law, because Job’s statements have been like those of wicked men! Examples of this is when Job states:

“For the arrows of the Almighty are within me; my spirit drinks in their poison; the terrors of God are arrayed against me.”—Job 6:4

“Have I sinned? What have I done to You, O Watcher of men? Why have You set me as Your target, so that I am a burden to myself? Why then do You not pardon my transgression, and take away my iniquity?”—Job 7:20-21

“I will say to God, ‘Do not condemn me; show me why You contend with me. Does it seem good to You that You should oppress, that You should despise the work of Your hands, and smile on the counsel of the wicked?’”—Job 10:2-3

“If my head is exalted, You hunt me like a fierce lion, and again You show Yourself awesome against me. You renew Your witnesses against me, and increase Your indignation toward me; changes and war are ever with me.”—Job 10:16-17

“Why do You hide Your face and regard me as Your enemy?”—Job 13:24

Not only has Job attempted to justify himself rather than God {Job 32:2}, but he has added (a) rebellion to his sin, (b) clapped his hands and (c) multiplied his words against God.

Clapping of hands can be a sign of approval or a derogatory sign of disrespect and disdain in attempting to silence what others were saying. In this case it was the latter. Elihu is telling us that Job had clapped his hands in an attempt to silence or ignore what the others had to say.

Today, it would be like a person putting their fingers in their ears and then repeating out loud, “La-la-la-la-la-la-la......”

On top of that, Job had uselessly multiplied his words against God by repeating or rephrasing what he had already said.

Elihu and the other three friends may have actually clapped their hands in approval or shouted, ‘hallelujah’, when Job concluded his discourse by saying, “The words of Job are ended”.

---

10 It is actually Satan, the “Devil”, that “Ancient Serpent”, who goes roaming the earth like a lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>First Round of Speeches</th>
<th>Second Round of Speeches</th>
<th>Third Round of Speeches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme</strong></td>
<td><strong>1st Speech</strong></td>
<td><strong>2nd Speech</strong></td>
<td><strong>3rd Speech</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declaration of God’s greatness</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>9:1-12</td>
<td>12:7-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disillusionment with God’s ways</td>
<td>7:11-19</td>
<td>9:13-10:17</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Despair with life (or desire to die)</td>
<td>6:8-13; 7:1-10</td>
<td>10:18-22</td>
<td>14:1-22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 34-1. The Major Themes Repeated in Job’s Responses**
Bibliography

(4) *Barnes Notes*,