

The Drive By God Defender

1. If this was a post-graduate seminar on the Book of Job, we would spend a lot of time on this section. There are lots of riches here but how much of those we can mine in a 25-35min sermon format is questionable. So...we will fly over some of this at 20,000ft and ask you to read and meditate, gathering words and phrases to help you express your own faith and doubt.
2. Remember where we are in the Book. We see the “behind the curtain” scenes in chapter 1 where Satan is convinced that people are not worth God’s effort to make and love them. Shortly, Satan goes after Job, ruining his life. Three friends come to sit with Job and things are good until Job complains about his state. His friends react to this with defenses of God’s perfect goodness...but their view of God and His perfect nature requires them to find something wrong within in Job or in his life that would justify God is allowing such suffering to take place.
3. The speeches went back and forth with some predictability before that pattern gets punted in chapter 26. Job goes on a lengthy speech that is so back and forth that some believe this is a condensing, a digest, of weeks and months of arguments. We take up the story with the last chapter of this period, chapter 31.
4. Job does a public and ruthless moral self-check. Remember when David asked God to search and know him and see if there is any fault in him? (**Psalm 139:23-24**) That always chilled me to the bone because I KNOW there is more evil in me than I’m aware of at any given time. Job ups the ante in a major way here by standing before God and, it is believed, his entire community and challenging them to find any evil in his life, his history, in his various roles (husband, father, community leader), and his heart.
5. **Job 31:5-8,13,16,17,19-22**. He also challenges anyone to point out a single time that he did anything wrong for money or showed a love of money (31:24-25). Or, how about any single time that he worshipped another god – perhaps in the form of the sun or moon (very, very common in his world).

6. He challenges any who know him to point out a single time where he gloated over an enemy's downfall (be careful how we think about political rivals. The top downloaded song after Margaret Thatcher's death). He defies anyone to point out any time where he did not feed the hungry, where he lusted after a woman, or when he has mistreated anyone who works for him.
7. This chapter ends with "the words of Job are ended." But...there are a lot more words to come. First up, a young man who has been biding his time: Elihu. (Job 32:1-10)
8. This fellow first goes after the three friends of Job for not arguing well enough. He seems...full of himself and over confident. (Job 31:17-22) Please note that the theology of Job's friends hasn't changed a bit. Elihu says that if he says anything wrong, God will "take me away." In other words, do good and you are blessed, do evil and you are punished, and we can tell if God likes you by what happens to you in your life.
9. Sigh. Ecclesiastes hasn't been written yet, but Elihu could have taken some time to at least consider that his theology might be wrong. So... he goes on a long rant. Spoiler alert: the next speaker won't speak for several chapters. Elihu goes on and on, absolutely convinced that no one can answer him, no one knows as much as he does until he is abruptly interrupted...by God. Yikes.
10. In chapter 33, Elihu says that Job is absurd to say he is clean and clear of sin because...he is being punished! (just keep saying it, Elihu...). He says that God must have already talked to Job, warning him with dark and terrifying visions in his dreams. How Elihu knows this is unsaid but it is a critical part of the theology of the time.
11. I just want you to get a taste of all of Elihu's speeches here for there is a consistent theme here: Elihu is smart and wise and knows his stuff and Job is a liar, a dishonest sinner who should shut up and listen. (33:31-33) Jesus would make sure we know what God thinks about religious people, people who claim to speak for him, but who live and speak with pride and arrogance and judgment against others.

12. Elihu then, in chapter 35, tells Job that he is too small, too insignificant, to ask God questions. He even acts like everyone knows that so good people never ask God why He moves or doesn't move (**Job 34:10**) How does he back up this bizarre statement? By saying that any who DO question God are, by that action, proven to be wicked.
13. In chapter 36, I truly wonder if Elihu has gone insane. First, his opinion of himself goes even higher (**36:2-4**). He then goes on a long rant against either Job and his personal evil or the evil of men everywhere. It is hard to say which, because the subjects he hits are new: he claims evil people end up dying in the arms of male prostitutes, idolaters. Or they take and offer bribes as a way of life, just waiting for darkness to fall so they can drag people from their homes.
14. Elihu then turns to two chapters of glorifying the power and majesty of God as seen in nature. It's actually pretty good stuff, but when you use good stuff to hurt or judge another person, you have spoken for God deceitfully. Look at this example: **Job 36:27-33**.
15. We leave Elihu at this high point and will come right back to it next week. For now, let us learn at least this lesson: Do not speak deceitfully for God. If you don't know why this happened or what that did not happen, say so. And then look for ways to serve the hurting person in front of you.
16. **For we are not given immunity from storms. We are given an example of how to live, and who to be, during the storms.**