

JOB

Chapter 37

Elihu Proclaims God's Majesty

“At this also my heart trembles and leaps out of its place. 2 Keep listening to the thunder of his voice and the rumbling that comes from his mouth. 3 Under the whole heaven he lets it go, and his lightning to the corners of the earth. 4 After it his voice roars; he thunders with his majestic voice, and he does not restrain the lightnings when his voice is heard. 5 God thunders wondrously with his voice; he does great things that we cannot comprehend. 6 For to the snow he says, ‘Fall on the earth,’ likewise to the downpour, his mighty downpour. 7 He seals up the hand of every man, that all men whom he made may know it. 8 Then the beasts go into their lairs, and remain in their dens. 9 From its chamber comes the whirlwind, and cold from the scattering winds. 10 By the breath of God ice is given, and the broad waters are frozen fast. 11 He loads the thick cloud with moisture; the clouds scatter his lightning. 12 They turn around and around by his guidance, to accomplish all that he commands them on the face of the habitable world. 13 Whether for correction or for his land or for love, he causes it to happen. 14 “Hear this, O Job; stop and consider the wondrous works of God. 15 Do you know how God lays his command upon them and causes the lightning of his cloud to shine? 16 Do you know the balancings of the clouds, the wondrous works of him who is perfect in knowledge, 17 you whose garments are hot when the earth is still because of the south wind? 18 Can you, like him, spread out the skies, hard as a cast metal mirror? 19 Teach us what we shall say to him; we cannot draw up our case because of darkness. 20 Shall it be told him that I would speak? Did a man ever wish that he would be swallowed up? 21 “And now no one looks on the light when it is bright in the skies, when the wind has passed and cleared them. 22 Out of the north comes golden splendor; God is clothed with awesome majesty. 23 The Almighty—we cannot find him; he is great in power; justice and abundant righteousness he will not violate. 24 Therefore men fear him; he does not regard any who are wise in their own conceit.”

37:1–13 A continuation of Elihu’s hymnic description of God’s marvels exhibited in the earth’s atmosphere, beginning in 36:27. His heart pounds at the awesome display (see v. 1). The passage reveals a sophisticated observation of atmospheric conditions and their effects: the evaporation and distillation of water for rain, the clouds as holders of moisture (see 36:28; 37:11) and the cyclonic behavior of clouds (see v. 12). Such forces originate from God’s command and always perform his will for mankind, whether for good or for ill (v. 13). (CSB)

Elihu sees storms as acts of God that display His lordship. Fear of an approaching storm can produce a wildly beating heart. Throughout this section, Elihu reveals an impressive understanding of atmospheric conditions and their effects. (TLSB)

37:2 *keep listening*. The Hebrew for this verb is plural, indicating that others (including the three friends) besides Job are being addressed here. (CSB)

Addressed to Job and his friends. (TLSB)

roar of his voice ... rumbling. Thunder (see v. 4). (CSB)

In Is 31:4, the verb form of this word is used of the growling of a lion. Job has been disturbed by God's activity in his life. Elihu is telling Job that God's presence will naturally unsettle him. (TLSB)

To Elihu the thunder was not merely a natural phenomenon. Neither he nor any of the ancients had the sophisticated understanding of thunder and lightning that today's physicists and meteorologists possess. But he did understand one important fact that most modern scientists ignore: the almighty God is in full control of all the forces of nature. (PBC)

37:3 *it. Lightning. corners.* Lit, "fringes," "borders," as of a carpet. The earth is described like a carpet with four corners. (TLSB)

37:4 *After it.* Elihu recognizes the cause and effect of lightning and thunder. (TLSB)

37:5 *we cannot comprehend.* That God's ways and thoughts are infinitely higher than ours is an important theme in chs. 38–41. (CSB)

Summary statement pertaining not only to storms but also to the following verses, which speak of God's wondrous power. (TLSB)

37:7 *seals up the hand.* Human activity is affected by the weather, which can halt planting and harvest. (TLSB)

In ancient times people did not have snow-clearing equipment such as we have today. When heavy snow fell, it would interrupt the people's activities and force them to remain indoors, as Elihu reminds his listeners in this verse. Their confinement could give them the opportunity to meditate on God as he has revealed himself in nature and also in his Word. We do well to learn from Elihu. Our busy life often tempts us to neglect God and his Word. (PBC)

37:9 *chamber.* Ancients believed various winds were stored in chambers in heaven; when God willed, He opened the doors of the appropriate chamber. (TLSB)

the scattering winds. Winds from the north that brought the cold, driving rain. (TLSB)

37:10 *breath of God.* Here a metaphor for a chilling wind. (CSB)

Metaphor for a chilling wind. (TLSB)

frozen fast. Words used of molten metal becoming a solid mass. (TLSB)

37:11 *loads.* Corresponding noun form in Is 1:14 is translated "burden." (TLSB)

moisture. Hbr word occurs only here. Some translators suggest it means "hail." (TLSB)

37:12 *around and around.* Brings to mind cloud action in a tornado. (TLSB)

accomplish all. Despite technological advances, people remain at the mercy of the weather, but it is not out of control. The clouds are carrying out God's commands. (TLSB)

37:13 *correction.* Lit, "whip"; symbol of punishment. (TLSB)

His land. Through the weather, God attends to the needs of His chosen people. (TLSB)

causes it to happen. According to Elihu, rain can be violent or gentle, scarce or overabundant, but never without purpose. (TLSB)

In the Hebrew this expression read for “for a rod.” The word “rod” often stands for punishment or correction. (PBC)

37:14–18 Job is challenged to ponder God’s power over the elements. The question format is also used in the divine discourses (chs. 38–41). (CSB)

37:14 *Hear this.* Elihu does not want this teaching moment to pass for Job. (TLSB)

stop and consider. He is confident that if Job would just pause a moment and pay attention, Job would see that his position has been foolish. (TLSB)

37:15–20 *Do you know.* First of five rhetorical questions (vv 15, 16–17, 18, 20a, 20b). Of course, Job does not know how God actually commands clouds and lightning. (TLSB)

37:16 *balancings.* Hbr word occurs only here in the OT. (TLSB)

perfect in knowledge. Here Elihu applies the phrase to himself, while in 37:16 he applies it to God—thus appearing to make himself equal to God. But the Hebrew for “knowledge” is not quite the same here as in 37:16. Elihu is probably referring to his ability as a communicator, i.e., he claims perfection in the knowledge of speech. (CSB)

37:17 *garments are hot...earth is still* – When the south wind would blow off the desert in the summer, people in that part of the world would swelter. Life would come almost to a standstill. Neither people nor animals would want to move around. (PBC)

When the sirocco blows off the desert, life stands still, and every creature seeks shade. Clothing becomes unbearably hot. (TLSB)

37:18 *cast metal mirror?* Mirrors were made of polished bronze. Ancients thought of the sky as a hard dome, a firmament, an “expanse.” When the sirocco blows, the sky looks as though it has been poured out like a molten liquid, hard and unbreakable, giving no rain. (TLSB)

People in ancient times perceived the sky to be a solid expanse of metal resembling a shining mirror. In the pollution-free environment the bright sun shining in the sky gave it the brilliance of a shiny metal mirror. Elihu now challenges Job to order the clouds to cover the sky to give relief from the extreme heat on a summer day. Obviously that would require ability far greater than Job’s. (PBC)

In Dt 28:23, a bronze sky symbolizes unremitting heat (see note there – No rain would pierce the sky or penetrate the ground). (CSB)

37:19 *Teach us.* “Cause us to know.” Elihu uses sarcasm, suggesting Job must have a level of enlightenment not possessed by those around him, who are speechless before such a majestic and powerful Creator. Job had called for an audience with God (31:35). (TLSB)

we cannot draw up our case. Job had dared to sign his defense and call for an audience with God (see 31:35). For this, Elihu seeks to shame him. But he softens his tone by including himself as one equally vulnerable to God’s majesty. (CSB)

37:20 *I would speak?* Elihu indicates that he would never assume to speak directly to God (cf Ex 20:18–19). *Did a man ever wish.* Elihu’s final rhetorical question. To presume to speak directly to God would be tantamount to a death wish. (TLSB)

37:21 *no one looks.* The sky becomes impossible to look at when the wind first sweeps the clouds aside and the sun breaks through. (TLSB)

37:22 *Out of the north comes.* Mount Zaphon in the far north was for the Phoenicians the sacred residence of El, the chief of their gods—as Mount Olympus was the mountain citadel of Zeus for the Greeks⁷. (CSB)

From the same direction as the rains come. Cf Ps 48:2. Elihu prepares Job for the coming storm in which God will appear (chs 38–41). (TLSB)

In the OT the expression “north” is often used to express the threat of invasion by a powerful nation. (PBC)

Elihu prepares Job for the appearance of God in the storm (chs. 38–41). (CSB)

golden splendor. When sunlight plays on the clouds, the colors are majestic, reminding us of God’s majesty. (TLSB)

37:23 *find.* Job speaks of finding God in 23:3. Elihu states that God is beyond such reach. (TLSB)

power; justice. These two qualities, often separated on earth, are inseparable in God (34:17). (TLSB)

abundant righteousness. Result of power and justice in perfect combination. (TLSB)

37:24 *fear him.* “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (Ps 111:10; Pr 9:10; see Pr 1:7. A conventional phrase equivalent to “true religion.” “Fear” in this phrase has the sense of reverential trust in God that includes commitment to his revealed will (word). (CSB)

Reverence and trust (1:1; 28:28). Elihu returns to the most important theme of wisdom. (TLSB)

Ch 37 The awesome power of a storm reminds us how truly small we are. Elihu tells Job to abandon obstinacy and with proper fear and trust, to submit to God as his Lord, thereby preparing Job for God’s visit in the whirlwind (38:1). All of the days of our lives are spent in such preparation. Though we may become distracted by many things in this life, both bane and blessing, God prepares us for His visitation, when all that will matter will be our confidence in His grace through Jesus Christ, our Lord. • Gracious God, prepare me for Your appearing. Amen. (TLSB)