



Study Guide: Job – Chapter 35

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This study guide provides an educational overview of Job Chapter 35 using a verse-by-verse structure, theological context, and application-oriented insights grounded in Scripture.

Introduction

Job Chapter 35 presents a critical response from Elihu, one of Job’s younger friends, addressing Job’s complaints about divine justice and human righteousness. This chapter contributes to the book’s flow by shifting the focus from Job’s lament to a theological reflection on God’s justice and human accountability. Readers should watch for Elihu’s argument that God’s justice transcends human understanding and that human sin or righteousness does not directly affect God’s status but does impact human experience and divine response.

Context

The immediate literary context of Job 35 is the series of speeches by Elihu, who intervenes after Job’s dialogues with his three friends. Unlike the earlier friends, Elihu offers a different perspective, emphasizing God’s transcendence and justice. Historically, the Book of Job is set within the covenant framework of ancient Israelite wisdom literature, grappling with the problem of suffering and divine justice. Elihu’s speeches occur in a setting where Job has expressed deep anguish and questioned God’s fairness, and Elihu seeks to correct Job’s assumptions by highlighting God’s sovereign righteousness and the limitations of human perspective.

Outline

The chapter can be divided into two main movements. The first movement (verses 1–3) features Elihu’s challenge to Job, questioning the basis of Job’s claims about his righteousness and God’s response. The second movement (verses 4–16) develops Elihu’s argument that God’s justice is not influenced by human righteousness or sin in a transactional way; instead, God’s justice is sovereign and transcendent. Elihu asserts that human cries for help are what draw God’s attention, and that Job’s failure to acknowledge this is the root of his misunderstanding.



Verse-by-Verse Study

Verses 1–3: Elihu begins by asking Job why he justifies himself before God and claims innocence. He questions Job’s self-righteousness and challenges the assumption that God must answer directly to human claims. Elihu implies that Job’s complaints lack proper understanding of God’s justice.

Verses 4–6: Elihu argues that human righteousness or wickedness does not affect God directly. God is exalted and beyond human influence, and thus He is not obligated to respond to human actions as if they alter His nature or decisions.

Verses 7–10: Elihu asks if Job has ever asked God for help or pleaded for mercy. He points out that God does not respond to human cries because of their righteousness or wickedness but because of their need. This highlights the relational dynamic between God and humanity, where God’s attention is drawn by human dependence rather than merit.

Verses 11–16: Elihu concludes by emphasizing that God hears the cries of the oppressed and the needy. He asserts that God’s justice is impartial and that human suffering and repentance are what prompt divine intervention. Elihu warns Job that failing to recognize this leads to misunderstanding God’s ways and missing the purpose of suffering.

Key Themes

One key theme is the transcendence of God’s justice, which is not subject to human manipulation or merit. Another theme is the nature of human righteousness and sin in relation to God’s sovereign will—human actions do not compel God but relate to Him through dependence and repentance. The chapter also emphasizes the importance of recognizing God’s attentiveness to human cries, especially from the oppressed, highlighting a relational rather than transactional dynamic. Finally, Elihu’s speech introduces the theme of divine communication, where God’s silence or response is tied to human humility and understanding rather than human entitlement.

Cross-References

Psalm 50:21 clarifies the idea that God does not need human sacrifices or righteousness to be pleased, echoing Elihu’s point that God is beyond human influence. Isaiah 55:8–9 provides insight into the transcendence of God’s ways and thoughts, reinforcing the theme that human understanding is limited in grasping divine justice. Romans 9:20–21



complements this by discussing God's sovereignty over human affairs, underscoring that humans cannot question God's decisions as if they were equal. Finally, James 5:11 reminds believers that God is compassionate and hears the cries of the suffering, aligning with Elihu's emphasis on God's attentiveness to human need rather than merit.

Application

Modern disciples can apply Job 35 by reflecting on the nature of their relationship with God, especially in times of suffering or confusion. Rather than demanding answers or justifying themselves before God, believers are encouraged to approach God with humility and dependence, recognizing His sovereign justice. This chapter challenges the tendency to view God's justice in transactional terms and invites trust in God's wisdom beyond human understanding. It also calls for attentiveness to the cries of the oppressed and needy, mirroring God's compassion. In personal trials, believers can learn to seek God's presence and mercy without presuming entitlement to explanations or outcomes.

Summary

Job Chapter 35 presents Elihu's theological correction to Job's complaints, emphasizing that God's justice is transcendent and not subject to human demands or merit. Elihu argues that God's attention is drawn by human dependence and cries for help, not by human righteousness or sin. This chapter shifts the focus from human self-justification to recognizing God's sovereign justice and compassionate response to human need, setting the stage for deeper reflections on suffering and divine purpose in the following chapters.