

## Who are you, Lord? Part one

### Opinion vs. Truth

#### Opening Text: Job 32:1, 6, 10, 17-20

Job had 4 “friends”. They all had an ‘opinion’ on why all these tragedies had happened to him. Elihu, the youngest of his friends, was no doubt a very opinionated man. He stated:

...” *I am full of words*”. “*I will speak that I may find relief*”.

He stated 3 times that he had an opinion on the matter. However, ‘opinions’ don’t always equate truth and that certainly was the case in Job’s story.

**Proverbs 18:2 (AMPC):** “*A [self-confident] fool has no delight in understanding but only in revealing his personal opinions and himself*”

‘The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines ‘opinion’ as

**“A belief or a judgement that rests on grounds insufficient to produce a complete certainty”**

Another dictionary defines ‘opinion’ as a “thought-out conclusion yet open to dispute”.

An opinion on its own, cannot therefore, be the source of truth, of unshakeable, absolute truth.

In the book of Job, we see how he and his friends were wrestling with some deep theological questions as well as some of the deepest philosophical questions of our human existence. They’re trying to make sense of what happened to Job and understand who God is in the process. They had opinions but no certainties. They had long dialogues but still came short of answers and truth.

They didn’t have a Bible to go to, or a bible teacher to find answers. What a contrast to where we stand today. We have full access to God’s ‘actual’ Word.

**1 Thessalonians 1:5** – “*For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance”, ... [absolute certainty – in the AMPC version]*

The Word came to us from God as truth that can be relied on – as “absolute certainty.”

(Today’s message is about allowing God’s Word to shape our beliefs rather than “having an opinion” or following someone else’s opinion. It is about the importance of holding on to God’s Word as the standard we follow and the basis for believing what we believe.)

Culture, the news media, education, public figures, ‘social media influencers’ all have such a strong impact upon our society – they do shape their worldview and beliefs.

However, opinions are shaky ground for you to stand on. They are subjective, personal and like the friends of Job found out in the end, they weren’t even truth. God calls us away from men’s opinions to find truth in His Word.

**Romans 12:2** - *2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

**Verse 16:** *Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.*

**1. A wisdom that comes from opinion is no wisdom at all.**

- a) If opinion is ‘a belief that rests on grounds insufficient to produce a complete certainty’ – where is the wisdom in that?
- b) An opinion is always a personal view. It is deeply subjective. Our personal view can be the result of so many things: our own life experience, culture, education etc, - but it is not necessarily the Truth.
- c) Like Elihu, there are people who have an opinion of who God is, an opinion of eternity, an opinion about the purpose of life but what we need is not an opinion but the certainty that God offers through His Word.

**Jeremiah 8:9** - *The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken. Behold, they have rejected the word of the LORD; so, what wisdom do they have?*

Wisdom is in the Word. A wisdom that comes from opinion is no wisdom at all. Hence the scripture: “do not be wise in your own opinion”.

**2. When opinions become doctrine**

In the days of Jesus, the Scribes and Pharisees had turned their opinions about God into doctrine and taught it as doctrine. Jesus told them that because of their traditions they had made the Word of God of no effect.

**Mark 7:13** - *“making the word of God of **no effect** through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do.”*

The ‘tradition’ that Jesus was talking about was what became known as the Talmud: 6200 pages of the teachings and opinions of thousands of rabbis on a variety of subjects like God, the Messiah, the Law, Jewish ethics, philosophy, customs, history, love and many other topics.

No wonder Jesus was rejected by these people: ‘the experts’ – the very people who were the spiritual leaders of Israel rejected Jesus because He did not fit their opinion and their doctrine.

For centuries they knew that the Messiah would come, and they looked for Him. However, they had developed many theories and opinions of how the Messiah was going to come and what that was going to look like. Their own human theories blinded them to His coming. Jesus called them *'the blind leading the blind'*.

They missed the time of their visitation because of their doctrines – doctrines of man, opinions about the truth – but not the Truth itself. And yet, Jesus came exactly as the Scriptures said He was going to come. They missed it because the truth was buried under so many layers of opinion.

Human opinions and doctrines can cause us to miss Jesus!

**Mark 12:37**, says that the experts rejected Jesus but *"the common people heard Him gladly"*

Saul had an encounter with Jesus on the Road to Damascus. At that point he was not ignorant of religion and God. Quite the opposite, he had studied under the experts, under great scholars like Gamaliel. However, he remained blinded about the Messiah and persecuted the church. When He met the Messiah he said, *"Who are you, Lord?"*

**Acts 9:5** - *And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting..."*

He knew it was the Lord, but who was the Lord? - He didn't know the Lord.

### **3. The dangers of following human precepts**

**Hosea 5:11** - *Ephraim is oppressed and broken in judgment, because he willingly walked by human precept.*

Human precepts cannot produce freedom. That only comes from the truth of God.

In **6:3**, we read - *Let us know, let us pursue the knowledge of the Lord.*

That is the kind of knowledge we are to pursue. The knowledge that comes from Him.

**1 Timothy 6:20-21** - *O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge— **21** by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith. Grace be with you. Amen.*

Paul exhorts Timothy to stick with the Word that was committed to His trust and reject human theories. Man's opinions had caused some Christians to be robbed of their faith.

- **Ephesians 5:6** – *'Let no one deceive you with empty words'*
- **Colossians 2:4**– *'lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words'*.
- **1 Thessalonians 2:5** – *'Flattering words'*
- **Romans 16:18** – *'Smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts'*
- **2 Peter 2:3** – *'Deceptive words'*
- **2 Peter 2:18** – *'Great swelling words of emptiness'*

- **Jude 1:16** – ‘Great swelling words’.

### **Conclusion:**

God call us away from “opinion” to truth, to His word. We are to allow God’s word to shape our thinking, our worldview, our values, what we believe concerning God, eternity, the purpose of life, parenting, relationships, family etc.

#### **1. God’s thoughts are higher**

**Isaiah 55:9** - *“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.*

2. **God’s word** is not simply ‘A belief that rests on grounds insufficient to produce a complete certainty’. That is an opinion. No. His word is sure. It carries certainty. That certainty causes us to have faith – and faith is a mountain-moving force.

#### **3. God’s Word carries the potential for freedom**

**John 8:31-32** - *<sup>31</sup> Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. <sup>32</sup> And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”*

4. **God’s word carries the potential for transformation. When we allow it to renew our minds, it will produce tangible results in our lives: it will transform us.**

Job and his friends didn’t have a Bible to go to and no real point of reference to understand some of the deep questions they were grappling with. We do. Let us live a word-centered life.