

## July 5: Job 29-30 and Acts 12

Job begins to give his last claim to innocence. He longs for the days gone by where he was respected by everyone in the town. In those days, the business of the cities was conducted at the gates. When Job would come up to the gates, the young men withdrew because of his importance. The older men even stood to their feet when he entered. Job enjoyed a place of prominence before all this calamity hit.

Even though he was a man of fame and renown, Job now finds that he is mocked by the dirges of society. It's not just the rich officials and other folks that scorn him. The poor folks also mock him and taunt him. The mallow Job references is also known as saltwort. It came from an edible plant that was used for feeding the poor. To put an even finer point on the destitution his mockers live in, he also explains that they use the broom tree for food. In those days, the broom tree was generally used to make charcoal, not food. Despite their poverty, these folks now look upon Job and they sing songs to mock him.

How would we respond if we were ever put in a position like that? What would happen if we found ourselves in a spot like Job is in now? As believers, just like the rest of the world, we have our ups and downs in life. When the low points hit, what do we do? Do we continue to praise God and walk through the storm with Him?

In the Acts reading, we see that persecution is once again upon the church. James, the son of Zebedee is killed. When Herod sees that this pleased the people, he has Peter arrested with the intent to execute him. However, Peter has friends that pray for his release. An angel of the Lord comes and helps him in the middle of the night. Peter runs to where his friends are at. The woman answering the gate is so thrilled to hear Peter's voice that she fails to open the gate. Instead, she runs to tell the good news to the others. They tell her she is crazy.

Herod meets an interesting fate. He delivered a public address on an appointed day in royal robes while seated on the throne. The people screamed that they were not hearing the voice of a mere man. Instead, they were hearing the voice of a god. The LORD struck Herod down for his hubris. We are not certain of what exact physical ailment killed Herod. Some contend that it was appendicitis. Others hold that he was poisoned. Some believe that he died from intestinal blockage. Either way, with Herod out of the picture, spreading the message will be easier now.

## July 6: Job 31-32 and Acts 13:1-23

Job concludes his defense by stating that he has not looked at a young woman. He has not fallen into the sins of the flesh, nor has he even thought about it. If he had been seduced by a neighbor's wife, then his wife could have been taken by another. It would be a disgrace! In those days, even within the pagan cultures, adultery was deemed immoral and in many of the pagan cities it carried the death sentence. Job states that he has not even rejoiced when his enemies were in distress. He really paints the picture that he is upright and honest by stating that he does not even have any impure thoughts.

Elihu, the son Barachel the Buzite responds. Elihu is not happy with Job or Job's friends. He has kept his mouth shut until now. However, after seeing that Job is righteous Elihu becomes angry with him. He is also angry because Job's friends have been unable to refute any of Job's claims of innocence, yet they still condemned the man. Essentially, Elihu has had enough with both parties and decides to enter the debate. He has kept silent until now because he is significantly younger than Job and the other friends. Generally, the older folks were considered to have the wisdom. Elihu finds that this is not the case with these men.

In the New Testament reading, we read about the teachers and prophets in Antioch. There was Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manean, and Saul. They spent their days ministering and fasting. Saul and Barnabas are set apart for special work. They will take God's message to Cyprus! Are we obedient when God gives us an assignment?

Barnabas and Saul first go to Salamis. They begin proclaiming God's message in the synagogues. When they were done there, they came across a sorcerer accompanying the proconsul, Sergius Paulus. Paulus was an intelligent man and listened to what Barnabas and Saul had to say. The sorcerer tried to steer the proconsul away from the faith. Saul/Paul is filled with the Holy Spirit and rebukes the sorcerer for trying to steer the proconsul away from Christ. Paul says that the man is the son of the devil, full of deceit and all fraud. Paul pronounces judgment on the sorcerer. The sorcerer is blinded by a mist. The proconsul sees all of this and comes to believe in Jesus.

July 7: Job 33-34 and Acts 13:24-52

Elihu tells Job to listen to the words he is about to say. He is speaking boldly from the heart. Even though he speaks words of rebuke to Job, Elihu is quick to note that he is made from the very same earth that Job is. They were both formed by God. Elihu shows Job that he is wrong for taking God to court over every little thing. Job expects an answer. Sometimes God is silent when we have questions. Just because He does not answer does not mean that we can hold Him accountable. When He is silent, it is often for our benefit.

Elihu then starts on Job's friends. He identifies that it is impossible for God to do any wrong and He cannot act unjustly. God watches over man's ways and observes his steps. There is no darkness that anyone can hide themselves. God sees through the darkness. We cannot hide from Him.

In the New Testament reading, Paul and Barnabas continue preaching Jesus. They refer to John the Baptist preparing the way of the LORD. When John first stepped on the scene, there were some that thought perhaps he was the Messiah. John pointed them to Jesus. Paul recognizes that the Israelites have failed to see that Jesus is The LORD even though the prophecies of the Old Testament point to him.

They explain that Jesus was raised from the dead, never to decay. They then invoke the name of David, the great king of Israel. David was set apart, a man after God's own heart, but he tasted death and his body decayed. Not so with Jesus. Paul and Barnabas warn the people not to become hard hearted and scoff at the message. Things were going great with their preaching and

teaching. However, there is an uprising. Some folks don't like what these men have to say. They rally a group of people to expel them from the district. Paul and Barnabas do not take this personally. Instead, they shake the dust from their feet and continue their journey. When Jesus commissioned the 12 to go into the towns and tell of His arrival, He commanded them to shake the dust from their feet when a town would not accept them. When a person rejects our witness about God Almighty, they are not rejecting us, they are rejecting God. When that happens, there is no need to take it personally. Instead, we shake the dust off and keep going!

July 8: Job 35-37 and Acts 14

Elihu asks a fair question. Is it right to say that we are righteous before God. We know the answer is no. We are not righteous before him, nor can we make ourselves righteous. He then asks how the sin of people affects God. In reality, the sin does not affect Him. Instead, it affects the sinner and his or her family and friends. Things go from bad to worse based on the sinfulness and then cries are lifted up. However, Elihu asserts that these cries go unanswered because they are empty.

If people are trapped in their sins, God tells them what they have done wrong and how they have acted arrogantly. He opens their hearts to correction and insists that they repent from their sin. That is a struggle for most people. It is hard to give up the sins that we are entrenched in. It is hard to do that complete turnaround from our sin and vice and turn to Christ.

Elihu then speaks about the greatness of God. When He speaks, he does not restrain the lightning. There is thunder and a roaring sound. He does great things that we cannot comprehend. He sends the snow, He sends the rain, He sends the sunshine. It is all directed by Him. How can we understand His ways? God is infinitely wise. We will never be as smart as Him.

In the New Testament reading, Paul and Barnabas go to Iconium. They begin preaching in the synagogue. Their message is received by a few, but they are soon run out of town just like they were at Antioch. Even though there are some that are willing to receive the message, there are still people adamantly opposed to the message of Christ.

When they went to Lystra, Paul healed a man by telling him to stand up. As a result, he and Barnabas are both mistaken for gods. The priest of Zeus even goes so far as to bring them oxen and garlands. When they see this, they mourn and tear their clothes. They are upset that the people do not see that it is God that did the work. The people are trying to give these mortal men the credit for what God had done.

July 9: Job 38-39 and Acts 15: 1-21

Now, The LORD answers Job from the whirlwind. I really wish I had been around to see that! God asks who the person is that is obscuring His counsel with ignorant words. Job has been speaking out of hand, not knowing what God has been doing from the beginning. God asks for Job's qualifications to speak the way that he has been. Since Job is so smart, he should be able to tell how God fixed the earth's dimensions and what supports its foundations. Certainly, Job should know how the water has been contained on earth and other provisions God has made for

the earth since he claims to know so much. Of course, Job is completely ignorant of these things. He has been speaking from his limited knowledge.

Today we have an idea of some of these things God mentions here. The stars, the water cycle, how gravity works. Science can sometimes show us the how, but it does not show us the why. Nor does it show us how God figured it all out to make this great celestial earth that we are spinning around on right now. Though we may have some ideas and some knowledge about these things, we should not let that go to our heads. God is God and we are not.

To further demonstrate His control, God brings up the wild game of the world. The mountain goats give birth with no trouble. The deer go into labor with no human around to help them out. Their offspring are healthy and grow up in an open field. Even the ostrich abandons her eggs in the sand, not realizing that someone or something could crush them, yet the ostrich has not gone extinct. Job has thought a little too much of himself. God is straightening him out.

In the New Testament reading there is an issue with circumcision again. We saw this before in chapter 11. We see it again in chapter 15. There are still those that are hanging salvation on the ritual and not on the relationship. Old habits die hard, unfortunately. Paul and Barnabas engage these folks in serious debate. Even though their arguments are compelling, there are still some believers that were once Pharisees that demand circumcision to keep the law of Moses.

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July 10: Job 40-42 and Acts 15: 22-41

The LORD continues speaking to Job. He asks that Job answer Him like a man. Job has brought these accusations, but Job hasn't factored in the greatness of God. The LORD uses two beasts as imagery in His final answer to Job. The first animal is Behemoth. We are unsure exactly what this animal was. One explanation is that it is along the lines of the mythological bull of heaven in the Epic of Gilgamesh. Other theories are that the Behemoth is a buffalo, dinosaur, rhinoceros, or a hippopotamus. The only other time behemoth occurs in the Bible is in Psalm 73 when David compares his formerly bitter soul to a beast.

The LORD also brings up Leviathan, a sea beast. He uses imagery that compares Leviathan to a raging dragon coming from the sea. Both Job and Leviathan were created by Him. Again, we do not know exactly what Leviathan refers to here, but the leading theories are that it was either whale, shark, dinosaur, sea monster, or crocodile. God's challenge to Job indicates that Job would be unable to subdue or hunt Leviathan without help. Job would collapse in fear if he were to come across the beast. Job cannot tame this animal, but The LORD has.

Job relents and repents in ashes and dust. He sees the errors of his ways. God rebukes Eliphaz and his friends for speaking lies about The LORD. He commands that Eliphaz and the other friends bring animals to sacrifice for their indiscretions. Then Job will pray for them. After Job prays, The LORD restores Job. He gains back his former wealth and then some. He also has more sons and daughters. One thing that always sticks with me about Job is that he is NEVER told what had been happening behind the scenes. He is never informed about the test that the adversary had proposed to God.

In the New Testament reading, Judas and Silas are sent to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. The elders send a letter to the believers in Antioch. One thing to note about this letter is that it forbids them to eat food offered to idols. This is a point of contention in the early church. Some believers won't be affected by another eating the meat offered to idols, but some will. As a result, it is decided it is best to abstain so as to not be a stumbling block.

After some time, Paul and Barnabas decide to part ways. The reason given here in the Scripture is that Barnabas wanted to bring along Mark. Mark had abandoned them earlier and Paul did not want to bring him on their journey as a result. Paul will later give further explanation on why they left. Sometimes, it is best to part ways with someone when we cannot get along with them. From what I can see, there are church issues and there are kingdom issues. The church issues are generally in house and won't affect the kingdom. However, if these issues are not dealt with Biblically, then they can quickly become kingdom issues. Paul is smart in his decision to part ways. The disagreement between the two, if they had stayed together, would possibly drive people away from Christ, not draw them.

July 11: Psalms 1-3 and Acts 16:1-15

Most of the Psalms were written by David. They were collected over his lifetime. Some of them are for prayer, others are for worship. Either way, they give us an insight into what was happening in his life when he wrote them. One of my favorite things about the Psalms is that David holds nothing back from The LORD. When he is happy, he communicates it. He also communicates it when he is sad or mad. This shows how relational the One True God is. We too can take all our joys and our sorrows to Him. He is always standing by to hear from one of His children!

We read about the two ways that people can go. A person that takes pleasure in The LORD's instructions will be firmly established. One that does not will be tossed about like chaff. The LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the wicked are on the path to destruction.

Psalms were written during his son's revolt. Absalom wanted the throne and led an offensive against David. Unfortunately, Absalom would not repent and wound up dying. David takes us through the woes he is feeling. Despite the fact that his enemies are increasing, he knows that God has placed His shield around him.

As life gets crazy and we run into opposition one thing is for sure, God is still there for us and He is still in control.

In the New Testament reading, Timothy is selected as Paul's protege. They begin evangelizing in Europe. The Holy Spirit prevents them from speaking in Asia. The two spend plenty of time traveling before settling in Philippi. Philippi was a Roman colony within the district of Macedonia. There a woman by the name of Lydia comes to have faith in Christ. The LORD opened her heart for her to understand the Gospel message. Since she is considered a believer, the two men decide to stay at her house. Notice that she did not come to the understanding herself. Instead, she came to know because God had opened up her heart. We will come across people in our lives that we are trying to minister to, but they will not come to belief. Keep praying for them. Perhaps one day, The LORD will open their hearts to understand too!

July 12: Psalms 4-6 and Acts 16: 16-40

David gives praise to God for vindicating him against his enemies. He asks how long the exalted men will insult him and they will chase after worthless things. "How long" is an expression that shows concern for the duration of a person's condition. This indicates they have been insulting David and loving worthless things for a very long time.

He continues to give praise in Psalm five, though he starts asking that The LORD would listen to his cry. God has made David's life abundant. He has much to be thankful for. David calls the people that take refuge in God to rejoice.

Psalms indicate that David was suffering from something. We are not told exactly what he is suffering from. However, based on what he writes, he believes that there is some underlying sin that is causing his suffering. In those days, when poor health or other bad things came upon a person, it was believed that it was a result of a sin. Whatever David is going through, it is clearly

rough. His pillow is wet with tears. In all of this current suffering, David knows that God will deliver him. He looks to the future when his enemies will be defeated. David takes it all to The LORD. He takes his joys, praises, hurts, and gripes. One thing that Psalms shows us is how relational God is with His people. We can take all of our joys and concerns to Him in prayer and petition.

In the New Testament reading, Paul and Silas continue traveling. They met a girl that had a spirit that allowed her to tell the future. This spirit showed her that Paul and Silas were followers of the One True God. Paul becomes frustrated with her pronouncements and orders the spirit to come out of her. It is interesting to note that the spirit knows of the One True God and is obedient to His servants. When the spirit leaves, the owners of the girl realize that they cannot turn a profit off of her anymore, so they go to the officials and have Paul and Silas put in prison.

While in prison, Paul and Silas sing hymns of praise and pray. An earthquake hits and frees the men. They do not run out of the cell. Instead, they remain. When the guard sees the gate is open and assumes the men fled, he prepares to kill himself, but Paul and Silas let him know they are there before he does. It might seem extreme that the guard would immediately think of suicide to get out of his plight. However, if Paul and Silas had left, the guard would surely have been executed. When the guard sees the men are still there, he comes to belief. He and his household are baptized and become believers in Christ.