

Job's Final Speech (c. 2200 BC)

Job 29–31

Job Reflects on the Past

29:1 Then Job continued his speech:

- 2 "O that I could be as I was
in the months now gone,
in the days when God watched over me,
3 when he caused his lamp
to shine upon my head,
and by his light
I walked through darkness;
4 just as I was in my most productive time,
when God's intimate friendship was experienced in my tent,
5 when the Almighty was still with me
and my children were around me;
6 when my steps were bathed with butter
and the rock poured out for me streams of olive oil!
7 When I went out to the city gate
and secured my seat in the public square,
8 the young men would see me and step aside,
and the old men would get up and remain standing;
9 the chief men refrained from talking
and covered their mouths with their hands;
10 the voices of the nobles fell silent,
and their tongues stuck to the roof of their mouths.
11 "As soon as the ear heard these things, it blessed me,
and when the eye saw them, it bore witness to me,
12 for I rescued the poor who cried out for help,
and the orphan who had no one to assist him;
13 the blessing of the dying man descended on me,
and I made the widow's heart rejoice;
14 I put on righteousness and it clothed me,
my just dealing was like a robe and a turban;
15 I was eyes for the blind
and feet for the lame;
16 I was a father to the needy,
and I investigated the case of the person I did not know;
17 I broke the fangs of the wicked,
and made him drop his prey from his teeth.
18 "Then I thought, 'I will die in my own home,
my days as numerous as the grains of sand.
19 My roots reach the water,
and the dew lies on my branches all night long.
20 My glory will always be fresh in me,
and my bow ever new in my hand.'
21 "People listened to me and waited silently;
they kept silent for my advice.
22 After I had spoken, they did not respond;
my words fell on them drop by drop.
23 They waited for me as people wait for the rain,
and they opened their mouths as for the spring rains.
24 If I smiled at them, they hardly believed it;
and they did not cause the light of my face to darken.
25 I chose the way for them
and sat as their chief;
I lived like a king among his troops;
I was like one who comforts mourners.

Job Mourns His Present Disgrace

30:1 “But now they mock me, those who are younger than I,
whose fathers I disdained too much
to put with my sheep dogs.
2 Moreover, the strength of their hands—
what use was it to me?
Men whose strength had perished;
3 gaunt with want and hunger,
they would gnaw the parched land,
in former time desolate and waste.
4 By the brush they would gather herbs from the salt marshes,
and the root of the broom tree was their food.
5 They were banished from the community—
people shouted at them
like they would shout at thieves—
6 so that they had to live
in the dry stream beds,
in the holes of the ground, and among the rocks.
7 They brayed like animals among the bushes
and were huddled together under the nettles.
8 Sons of senseless and nameless people,
they were driven out of the land with whips.
9 “And now I have become their taunt song;
I have become a byword among them.
10 They detest me and maintain their distance;
they do not hesitate to spit in my face.
11 Because God has untied my tent cord and afflicted me,
people throw off all restraint in my presence.
12 On my right the young rabble rise up;
they drive me from place to place,
and build up siege ramps against me.
13 They destroy my path;
they succeed in destroying me
without anyone assisting them.
14 They come in as through a wide breach;
amid the crash they come rolling in.
15 Terrors are turned loose on me;
they drive away my honor like the wind,
and like a cloud my deliverance has passed away.
16 “And now my soul pours itself out within me;
days of suffering take hold of me.
17 Night pierces my bones;
my gnawing pains never cease.
18 With great power God grasps my clothing;
he binds me like the collar of my tunic.
19 He has flung me into the mud,
and I have come to resemble dust and ashes.
20 I cry out to you, but you do not answer me;
I stand up, and you only look at me.
21 You have become cruel to me;
with the strength of your hand you attack me.
22 You pick me up on the wind and make me ride on it;
you toss me about in the storm.
23 I know that you are bringing me to death,
to the meeting place for all the living.
24 “Surely one does not stretch out his hand
against a broken man
when he cries for help in his distress.

- 25 Have I not wept for the unfortunate?
Was not my soul grieved for the poor?
- 26 But when I hoped for good, trouble came;
when I expected light, then darkness came.
- 27 My heart is in turmoil unceasingly;
the days of my affliction confront me.
- 28 I go about blackened, but not by the sun;
in the assembly I stand up and cry for help.
- 29 I have become a brother to jackals
and a companion of ostriches.
- 30 My skin has turned dark on me;
my body is hot with fever.
- 31 My harp is used for mourning
and my flute for the sound of weeping.

Job's Final Defense—"If..."

- 31:1 "I made a covenant with my eyes;
how then could I entertain thoughts against a virgin?
- 2 What then would be one's lot from God above,
one's heritage from the Almighty on high?
- 3 Is it not misfortune for the unjust,
and disaster for those who work iniquity?
- 4 Does he not see my ways
and count all my steps?
- 5 If I have walked in falsehood,
and if my foot has hastened to deceit—
- 6 let him weigh me with honest scales;
then God will discover my integrity.
- 7 If my footsteps have strayed from the way,
if my heart has gone after my eyes,
or if anything has defiled my hands,
- 8 then let me sow and let another eat,
and let my crops be uprooted.
- 9 If my heart has been enticed by a woman,
and I have lain in wait at my neighbor's door,
10 then let my wife turn the millstone for another man,
and may other men have sexual relations with her.
- 11 For I would have committed a shameful act,
an iniquity to be judged.
- 12 For it is a fire that devours even to Destruction,
and it would uproot all my harvest.
- 13 "If I have disregarded the right of my male servants
or my female servants
when they disputed with me,
- 14 then what will I do when God confronts me in judgment;
when he intervenes,
how will I respond to him?
- 15 Did not the one who made me in the womb make them?
Did not the same one form us in the womb?
- 16 If I have refused to give the poor what they desired,
or caused the eyes of the widow to fail,
- 17 If I ate my morsel of bread myself,
and did not share any of it with orphans—
- 18 but from my youth I raised the orphan like a father,
and from my mother's womb
I guided the widow!
- 19 If I have seen anyone about to perish for lack of clothing,
or a poor man without a coat,

20 whose heart did not bless me
as he warmed himself with the fleece of my sheep,
21 if I have raised my hand to vote against the orphan,
when I saw my support in the court,
22 then let my arm fall from the shoulder,
let my arm be broken off at the socket.
23 For the calamity from God was a terror to me,
and by reason of his majesty I was powerless.
24 “If I have put my confidence in gold
or said to pure gold,
‘You are my security!’
25 if I have rejoiced because of the extent of my wealth,
or because of the great wealth my hand had gained,
26 if I looked at the sun when it was shining,
and the moon advancing as a precious thing,
27 so that my heart was secretly enticed,
and my hand threw them a kiss from my mouth,
28 then this also would be iniquity to be judged,
for I would have been false to God above.
29 If I have rejoiced over the misfortune of my enemy
or exulted because calamity found him—
30 I have not even permitted my mouth to sin
by asking for his life through a curse—
31 if the members of my household have never said,
‘If only there were someone who has not been satisfied from Job’s meat!’—
32 But no stranger had to spend the night outside,
for I opened my doors to the traveler—
33 if I have covered my transgressions as men do,
by hiding iniquity in my heart,
34 because I was terrified of the great multitude,
and the contempt of families terrified me,
so that I remained silent
and would not go outdoors—
35 “If only I had someone to hear me!
Here is my signature—
let the Almighty answer me!
If only I had an indictment
that my accuser had written.
36 Surely I would wear it proudly on my shoulder,
I would bind it on me like a crown;
37 I would give him an accounting of my steps;
like a prince I would approach him.
38 “If my land cried out against me
and all its furrows wept together,
39 if I have eaten its produce without paying,
or caused the death of its owners,
40 then let thorns sprout up in place of wheat,
and in place of barley, weeds!”

The words of Job are ended.

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