

JOB

Chapter 3

Job Laments His Birth

After this Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth. 2 And Job said: 3 “Let the day perish on which I was born, and the night that said, ‘A man is conceived.’ 4 Let that day be darkness! May God above not seek it, nor light shine upon it. 5 Let gloom and deep darkness claim it. Let clouds dwell upon it; let the blackness of the day terrify it. 6 That night—let thick darkness seize it! Let it not rejoice among the days of the year; let it not come into the number of the months. 7 Behold, let that night be barren; let no joyful cry enter it. 8 Let those curse it who curse the day, who are ready to rouse up Leviathan. 9 Let the stars of its dawn be dark; let it hope for light, but have none, nor see the eyelids of the morning, 10 because it did not shut the doors of my mother's womb, nor hide trouble from my eyes. 11 “Why did I not die at birth, come out from the womb and expire? 12 Why did the knees receive me? Or why the breasts, that I should nurse? 13 For then I would have lain down and been quiet; I would have slept; then I would have been at rest, 14 with kings and counselors of the earth who rebuilt ruins for themselves, 15 or with princes who had gold, who filled their houses with silver. 16 Or why was I not as a hidden stillborn child, as infants who never see the light? 17 There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest. 18 There the prisoners are at ease together; they hear not the voice of the taskmaster. 19 The small and the great are there, and the slave is free from his master. 20 “Why is light given to him who is in misery, and life to the bitter in soul, 21 who long for death, but it comes not, and dig for it more than for hidden treasures, 22 who rejoice exceedingly and are glad when they find the grave? 23 Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, whom God has hedged in? 24 For my sighing comes instead of my bread, and my groanings are poured out like water. 25 For the thing that I fear comes upon me, and what I dread befalls me. 26 I am not at ease, nor am I quiet; I have no rest, but trouble comes.”

Chs 3–37 These dialogues of Job with his friends do not always reflect divine truth. Therefore, they should be used cautiously. In the ensuing battle of words, the movement of thought from one point of contention to the next is circular. Each speaker draws concentric circles of argumentation around the central topic, repeating the issue and elaborating proof and rebuttal from various points of view. It is very effective in its total impact. (TLSB)

3:1 *After this.* After seven days of silence. (TLSB)

cursed the day of his birth. Lit, “his day.” Contrary to his wife’s advice (2:9), Job curses himself. Today, we would describe Job as depressed. (TLSB)

3:3 Introduces the rest of the chapter by giving a synopsis: vv 4–5 condemn the day, and vv 6–9 condemn the night. Ambr: “Job had recognized that to be born is the beginning of all woes, and therefore wished that the day on which he was born might perish, so that the origin of all troubles might be removed, and wished that the day of his birth might perish that he might receive the day of resurrection” (NPNF 2 10:178). (TLSB)

let the day perish on which I was born. Job’s very existence, which has been a joy to him because of God’s favor, is now his intolerable burden. He is as close as he will ever come to cursing God, but he does not do it. (CSB)

He was no robot but a human being with feelings that reacted to his severe losses and extreme physical pain. (PBC)

3:4 *let that day be darkness.* God had said in Ge 1:3, “Let there be light.” Job, using similar language, would negate God’s creative act. (CSB)

Opposite from the command of God at creation, “Let there be light” (Gn 1:3). (TLSB)

May God above not seek it. Since God’s interest gives existence to a day and a season, Job wishes that God above would not even seek or show interest in the day, causing it to perish. (TLSB)

3:5 *deep darkness.* Hbr term is same as “shadow of death” (Ps 23:4). Cf 10:21–22; 12:22; 16:16; 24:17; 28:3; 34:22; 38:17. (TLSB)

blackness of the day. Eclipse of the sun. (TLSB)

3:6 *let it not come into the number of the months.* Poetic; eliminate the day from the calendar, much as there is no Feb 30 on our calendar. (TLSB)

3:7 *barren.* Originally, rocky soil that fails to yield crops (Is 49:21). (TLSB)

joyful cry. At the birth of a child. (TLSB)

3:8 *those who curse it.* Eastern soothsayers, like Balaam (see Nu 22–24), who pronounced curses on people, objects and days. (CSB)

Professional sorcerers. *the day.* Same consonants in Hbr, but supplied with different vowels, give the word “sea” or “day.” (TLSB)

Leviathan. Using vivid, figurative language, Job wishes that “those who curse days” would arouse the sea monster Leviathan to swallow the day-night of his birth. (CSB)

Sea monster that turns beauty into dust and confusion. cf Is 27:1; Ps 74:14; 104:26; Ezk 29:3–5. Early Church translators and interpreters regarded Leviathan as a whale. (TLSB)

3:9 *stars of its dawn.* Morning stars, planets that shine before the rising sun (Venus, Jupiter, Mars, Mercury, or Saturn). (TLSB)

eyelids of the morning. Poetic; description of the dawn. (TLSB)

This can literally be translated “the eyelids of dawn,” as though dawn were a person opening her eyes at daybreak. (PBC)

3:11–12, 16, 20–23 A series of rhetorical questions. (CSB)

3:10 Job feels the day of his birth should be cursed because it allowed him to be born. (TLSB)

3:11 Introduces a section (vv 11–19) expressing a longing for death. (TLSB)

Why. Rhetorical question; Job has found no answer. (TLSB)

3:12 *knees receive me?* Suggests a parent's acceptance of the newborn. (TLSB)

The knees refer to the father's knees. In OT times it was the customary for a father to place the newborn baby on his knees to show that he accepted the child as his own. Even as a great grandfather Joseph received his grandson's children on his knees (Gen 50:23). (PBC)

3:13 *have slept...been at rest* – he described death as the great equalizer. Among the dead there is no difference between kings and subjects, masters and slaves, conquerors and captives, rich and poor, old and young. He was not talking about the eternal destiny of these people. (PBC)

Death itself holds no terrors for Job. In this state of mind, Job thinks himself better off dead. (TLSB)

3:14 *kings and counselors of the earth.* Job envisions his grave among majestic tombs. (TLSB)

ruins. Everyone's efforts end in ruins. (TLSB)

3:16 *stillborn child.* Used elsewhere only in Ps 58:8 and Ec 6:3. (TLSB)

Since in fact his birth had taken place, the next possibility would have been a stillbirth. He would then have lived only in the grave (or Sheol), which he envisions as a place of peace and rest (vv. 13–19; see note on Ge 37:35). Such a situation would be much better than his present intolerable condition, in which he can find neither peace nor rest (v. 26). – He was so utterly tormented physically, emotionally, socially and spiritually that he bluntly expressed the wish that he could die and thus be relieved of the suffering he was experiencing. (PBC)

3:17–18 *the wicked ... the prisoners.* Those accustomed to trouble are quiet in death. (TLSB)

3:18 *voice of the taskmaster.* As in Egypt (see Ex 5:13–14). (CSB)

3:20 Introduces a section (vv 20–23) that expresses a hatred of life. (TLSB)

misery. Same root as “trouble” in v 10. (TLSB)

bitter in soul. Biting dejection that attends a crushing defeat. Cf 1Sm 1:10; 22:2; 2Sm 17:8; Pr 31:7. (TLSB)

3:21–22 Death has become desirable for Job. (CSB)

long for death ... rejoice exceedingly. Job's wish for death (suicide) was never acted upon. Only someone whose life is full of misery would long for death. (TLSB)

Was Job thinking of suicide as he was speaking these words? It might appear as if he had suicide on his mind, but such a conclusion is not consistent with God's appraisal of Job as a man “blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil” (1:8). Neither is there any indication of such thoughts as we read his words in this chapter and throughout the book. Job wished for death but he did not intend to kill himself. Even when complaining to God he left his life in God's hands. (PBC)

3:23 *whom God has hedged in.* God, who had put a hedge of protection around him (see 1:10 and note), has now, he feels, hemmed him in with turmoil (see v. 26). (CSB)

For the first time, Job holds God directly responsible for his situation. This hedge is no longer one of protection (1:10), but one to prevent his escape from the prison of life. (TLSB)

Job's words might lead one to think that he was an unbeliever who rebelled against God. But we must keep in mind that as he spoke these words, he was suffering under many severe trials and afflictions. The devil had seized him and was mercilessly torturing him. These words and many that follow are the words of a desperate man, but not of an unbelieving man. (PBC)

3:24–26 Very thing Job fears (the loss of God's favor) has happened to him. (TLSB)

Ch 3 Even the most optimistic people will reach despair when overwhelmed by pain and suffering, as the examples of prisoners of war demonstrate. The mind snaps just as bones do. Scripture does not teach that death is a friend to those who suffer—death is always an enemy (1Co 15:26), but one overcome by the Lord. Commend those who despair to Jesus, who likewise cried, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Mt 27:46) and rose from the dead to say, “Peace be with you” (Jn 20:21). “Job is excused though he was not troubled by past evil deeds (Job 2:3–10). Therefore, troubles are not always punishments or signs of wrath. Indeed, terrified consciences should be taught that there are more important purposes for afflictions (2 Corinthians 12:9), so that they do not think God is rejecting them when they see nothing but God's punishment and anger in troubles” (Ap XIIB 61). • Lord, train my heart by Your Word in the midst of afflictions, that I may have a quiet conscience, at peace by Your grace. Amen. (TLSB)