

The Book of Job Chapter 3

Job Finally Speaks

Job has lost his possessions, his children, and his health. His wife has told him to “Curse God and die.” His friends (Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar) have been sitting with him for seven days following his terrible afflictions. All have been silent up to this point. Now, Job finally breaks the silence. Yet, is he speaking to them, to God, or to no one in particular? You decide.

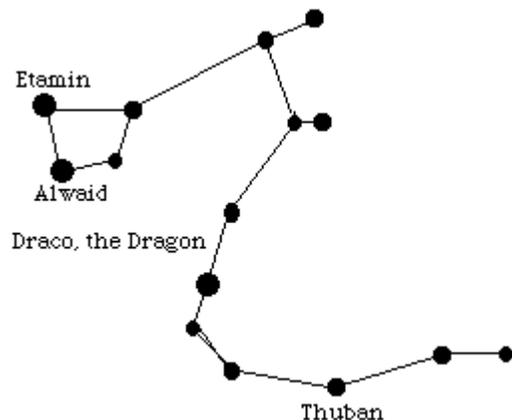
3:1 Job cursed the day of his birth, but didn’t curse God. Job’s despair is turned *inward*, not *outward*. His wife had told him to curse God, but instead he cursed himself. Job is severely depressed, as was the “Weeping Prophet”, Jeremiah. See Jeremiah 20:14-18.

3:2 Why is this short verse significant? Why are these few words a separate verse at all, and not combined with verse 3? Because this is a prose introduction to the poetic (stylized) verses which follow. Job is in pain and in distress, but he still retains his intelligence. He knows how to speak eloquently. In addition, he’s had seven days in which to compose his thoughts.

3:3 Job curses both the day of birth and the night of his conception, bringing to mind that even in ancient times people were aware that conception is the beginning of life. He isn’t saying that the days themselves should never have existed, but that those days should never be remembered. That’s apparent in the following verses.

3:4-10 The thoughts of verse 3 are amplified in these verses.

The major difficulty of this section is in verses 8 &9, which probably refer to the constellation now known as Draco, or the Dragon. This would be what Job calls “Levitation,” either a legendary sea monster, crocodile or alligator. Eastern and Middle Eastern mythologies saw the dragon constellation as being responsible for eating the Sun or Moon in an eclipse.



During a real eclipse, the ancient Chinese would make as much noise as possible, banging on pots and pans to try and scare away the dragon which was eating the Sun or Moon.

Around 800 BC, the prehistoric Adena people who lived in what is now Ohio created Serpent Mound (near Cincinnati) which is believed to have been inspired by the constellation Draco. This huge mound is nearly a quarter mile long.

Job is wishing that the mythology was true, and that people had the ability to rouse the dragon (Leviathan) so that it would swallow up the day of his birth.

In verse 9, the KJV and the NIV (among some other translations) lose Job's poetry when they translate, "the dawning of the day" (KJV), and "the first rays of dawn" (NIV) instead of the literal "the eyelids of the morning." Very sad!

3:11-12 In four questions, Job wishes that he had died an early death:

- Why didn't I die in the womb?
- Why didn't I die at birth?
- "Why did the knees receive me?" Obviously a reference to birth, but to be placed on a mother's or father's knees had the additional meaning of being formally received as a child by a mother or father, or foster mother or father. (Gen. 30:3-KJV; Gen. 50:23-KJV; Isaiah 66:12)
- Why did I live long enough to be able to nurse at my mother's breasts?

3:13-15 Job pictures death as a time of peaceful sleep. He desires to sleep as do those who built mausoleums or elaborate tombs filled with gold and silver. The word "ruins" can also mean "empty places" or "desolate places"—in this case, sepulchers or mausoleums which are empty of life.

3:16 Job repeats the thought of verse 11, wishing that he had never been born.

3:17-19 In the grave, all enjoy the peace they could never find on earth.

3:20-23 Light is associated with life. Darkness is associated with death and mourning. Job longs for death, and speaking of himself in the third-person, describes death as a precious treasure, something he would be very glad to find.

In verse 23, he speaks about being “hedged-in” by God. How does this differ from the words of Satan in 1:10?

3:24 “*For my sighing comes instead of my bread.*” Perhaps the meaning is that Job’s sighing—his pain—prevents him from eating.

3:25-26 “*The thing that I fear comes upon me.*” Job had faced loss after loss, and wondered (feared) whether those losses were really about him personally. With the affliction of his own body, his fears are confirmed.

In this chapter, Job doesn’t seem like the paragon of faith whom God described earlier. He’s the same person he was just a week before, but the circumstances in his life have changed. He’s now at a deep valley in his life instead of up on top as he was before (“*the greatest of all the people in the east*” 1:3).

Job is the same person he was before. God is the same as he was, and is, and always will be (“*For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed,*” Malachi 3:6).

Yet, Job is in despair and feels distant from God. He doesn’t curse God, but he’s certainly not happy with God either.

- What is meant by the statement, “Faith must have an object”?
- Where does our assurance of salvation come from?
- Why shouldn’t we look at our emotions or feelings regarding our assurance of salvation?
- What’s a danger with emotion-fueled worship practices?

Having studied chapter 3, do you feel that Job was speaking to his friends, to God, or to no one in particular?