

## Job's Opening Lament

### Job 3

**Job 3:1-10** - *"After this Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth. <sup>2</sup> And Job spoke, and said: <sup>3</sup> 'May the day perish on which I was born, and the night in which it was said, 'a male child is conceived.' <sup>4</sup> May that day be darkness; may God above not seek it, nor the light shine upon it. <sup>5</sup> May darkness and the shadow of death claim it; may a cloud settle on it; may the blackness of the day terrify it. <sup>6</sup> As for that night, may darkness seize it. May it not rejoice among the days of the year; may it not come into the number of the months.*

*<sup>7</sup> Oh, may that night be barren! May no joyful shout come into it! <sup>8</sup> May those curse it who curse the day, those who are ready to arouse Leviathan. <sup>9</sup> May the stars of its morning be dark. May it look for light, but have none, and not see the dawning of the day; <sup>10</sup> because it did not shut up the doors of my mother's womb, nor hide sorrow from my eyes."*

### Background Notes

A simple outline of Job:

Chapters 1-2 - Disasters of Job

Chapters 3-41 Dialogue with Job

Chapter 42 – Deliverance for Job

Job 3 begins the dialogue with Job that will continue through Job 41. These include the dialogues that Job had with his three friends Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar in Job 3-31. In their speeches, these three would-be counselors will try to convince Job that he's suffering because he has sinned. They will insist that Job is guilty because of some personal or secret sin in his life. Throughout these dialogues, Job maintains that he is innocent, and is not hiding secret sin. If God would only speak, he contends, his friends would see that he is innocent!

In Job 32-37 a fourth counselor, Elihu, will enter the picture. His position is not that Job is being punished for sin. He asserts that God is using Job's suffering to educate Job, and teach Job lessons that he needs to learn. In other words, Job's suffering is not punitive – it is educational.

In Job 38-41, God speaks to Job. The Lord speaks twice to Job in these chapters, and He gives Job the opportunity to respond after each speech. The Lord's speeches are not designed to humiliate Job, but to

humble him. God wants to bring Job to a position where he doesn't question God's ways, even though he may not fully understand God's ways. And all of us need to learn this lesson! God knows what He is doing in each of our lives, even though we may not fully understand how. Job 42 gives us Job's full repentance before the Lord, and his deliverance or restoration.

You will notice in your Bibles that all these chapters are written in Hebrew poetry format. [In this transcript we changed the format to save space.] We don't return to prose until the last portion of Job 42 – Job's deliverance.

In Job 4 the friends begin to speak. There are three rounds of discourses; each friend speaks in turn, and Job responds.

## Doctrinal / Teaching points

### 1. It is important to realize the reasons for Job's wish.

**Job 3:11-19** - *"Why did I not die at birth? Why did I not perish when I came from the womb? <sup>12</sup> Why did the knees receive me, or why the breasts, that I should nurse? <sup>13</sup> For now I would have lain still and been quiet. I would have been asleep. Then I would have been at rest <sup>14</sup> with kings and counselors of the earth, who built ruins for themselves, <sup>15</sup> or with princes who had gold, who filled their houses with silver. <sup>16</sup> Or why was I not hidden like a stillborn child, like infants who never saw light?*

*<sup>17</sup> There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest. <sup>18</sup> There the prisoners rest together; they do not hear the voice of the oppressor. <sup>19</sup> The small and great are there, and the servant is free from his master."*

Chapter 3 is Job's opening lament. It doesn't take much insight to see that Job wished he had never been born, or was no longer alive. In this chapter, Job's wishes could be divided into three separate wishes:

1. His wish that he hadn't been born (v1-10)
2. His wish that he had died at birth (v11-19)
3. His wish that he could die right then (v20-26)

Job wished that the day of his birth had never dawned, and could be removed from history (v3-7). In verse 8 Job refers to those who believed in a myth of that day, that with a pronouncement of a curse, the Leviathan sea monster could be aroused to swallow the sun and moon, and thus remove the day. This doesn't mean that Job believed the mythology, or that such a curse was possible. No, Job is just using a very colorful expression to say that he wished the day of his birth had never dawned. The Leviathan, by the way, was a plesiosaur-like sea creature that is probably now extinct. We'll talk more about the Leviathan in Job 41.

In verses 9-10 Job states that if the day of his birth had not dawned, his mother's womb would still be shut, and he would not be alive. But since Job was born, he wished that he had died at birth: *"Why did I not die at birth? Why did I not perish*

*when I came from the womb?” (v11). In verse 12, the “knees” refer to his mother’s lap, or the knees of his father acknowledging that a boy had been born into the family. How much better that would have been, “For now I would have lain still and been quiet, I would have been asleep. Then I would have been at rest with kings and counselors of the earth who built ruins for themselves, or with princes who had gold, who filled their houses with silver...” (v13-15).*

If Job’s mother had miscarried, and Job had never seen the light of day, then he would not be suffering now. Instead he would be at rest where there is no evil or weariness or slavery (v16-19). But Job didn’t die at birth, and so in verses 20-26 Job wished that he could die right then rather than suffer.

**Job 3: 20-26** - *“Why is light given to him who is in misery, and life to the bitter of soul, <sup>21</sup> who long for death, but it does not come, and search for it more than hidden treasures; <sup>22</sup> who rejoice exceedingly, and are glad when they can find the grave? <sup>23</sup> Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, and whom God has hedged in? <sup>24</sup> For my sighing comes before I eat, and my groanings pour out like water. <sup>25</sup> For the thing I greatly feared has come upon me, and what I dreaded has happened to me. <sup>26</sup> I am not at ease, nor am I quiet. I have no rest, for trouble comes” (v20-26).*

Why, Job asks, is life given to those who are suffering and want to die (v20-22)? And why is life is given to those whom God has “hedged in” (v23-24)? Here the “hedge” is not meant in the sense of protection, as in Job 1, but in the sense of being limited because of suffering.

All of Job’s fears had come upon him (v25-26). How much better, he lamented, to die and find ease and quiet and rest! We can understand Job’s death wish. Many believers have gone through great suffering, and can identify with Job. In fact, that’s certainly one reason why God included Job as a book of Scripture.

It’s important to realize the reasons for Job’s wish.

## **2. It is important to remember what Job does not wish.**

Although Job wished that he had never been born, or that he had died young, or that he could die rather than suffer, there’s not the slightest suggestion from Job that he might commit suicide, nor is there the slightest hint to his friends to put him out of his misery. If God had ever wanted to teach that suicide or euthanasia was justified in cases of extreme suffering, the book of Job would be the perfect opportunity, but this is not the case. In fact, it’s just the opposite!

Notice that Job doesn’t renounce his belief in God, nor does he Job “blaspheme” or speak ill of God. Even though Job doesn’t understand why he is suffering, and wishes that he could die, somehow he knows that God has allowed this suffering. Thus it would be wrong for him to end his life by suicide, or have others end it for him with “mercy killing.” Believers who favor euthanasia in cases of extreme suffering need to study the book of Job. Pain relief? Yes. Euthanasia? No.

Furthermore, notice that when Job wished that he had not been born, he didn't wish that he had been aborted. And when he wished that he had died at birth, he didn't wish that someone practiced infanticide, even though these evils were common in the ancient world. So it's important to remember what Job does **not** wish.

## Practical Application

### Why you ask "Why?" is very significant!

Job asks "why" a number of times in this chapter.

*"Why did I not die at birth? Why did I not perish when I came from the womb?" (v11)*

*"Why did the knees receive me? Why the breasts, that I should nurse?" (v12).*

*"Why was I not hidden like a stillborn child, like infants who never saw light?" (v16).*

*"Why is light given to him who is in misery, and life to the bitter of soul..." (v20)*

*"Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, and whom God has hedged in?" (v23).*

At this point Job was asking "Why?" because he didn't understand why God was allowing him to suffer, but he wasn't asking God "why" in an angry or rebellious or a demanding manner.

We'll see later that Job questioned God's fairness - and for that he was rebuked. But at this point Job wasn't asking "why" with an angry or bad attitude. It was a lack of understanding, and an honest question. *"Why was I allowed to live only to suffer?"*

Job wanted insight as to "why." It's not wrong for us to ask "why" when we need insight and understanding about a situation, as long as we ask with a humble attitude. But demanding answers from God with a rebellious and critical and whining attitude is the wrong way to ask "why."

Asking God for insight and understanding with the right attitude is not wrong - but the right attitude is very important. So how and why you ask "Why?" is very significant!