

e-concepts

A Weekly Publication of Relational Concepts Inc.

Lessons We Learn from Job Cursing His Birth in Job 3

By David DeWitt

- The first two chapters were prose, and now we begin a long section of mostly poetry (3:1–42:6), but it is a unique expression of poetry in that each discussion is introduced with a prose statement. As we move through this section, application is more difficult than interpretation. We can usually figure out what each of the men is saying, but sometimes they are right and sometimes wrong.
- So, we must first evaluate what they say from what we know to be true in other scripture passages, that is, from passages which clearly differentiate right and wrong, morality and theology. Application must follow interpretation, so the interpretation of the statements, of this debate, must be examined before they can be applied.



Concerning Job, Ryrie has an excellent perspective

Job speaks out of great physical and mental anguish. His own basic presupposition, that God always blesses the righteous and afflicts the wicked, has proven faulty. If he judges by his experience, he must conclude that his theology is wrong, for he cannot put what he believes to be true of God together with what is happening to him. Though at times Job reacts with hostility, he always turns back to God. Much of what he says later is exaggerated, untrue, and virtually blasphemous, [I would not say Job was blasphemous], but he never renounces God (“Ryrie Study Bible,” p. 781).

- **But the question is what do you do when your theology does not match reality**
The answer is, change your theology. Reality is always understood by faith. So it is important to rightly define faith. Faith which holds to something non-verifiable needs to change. If you believed in Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny, then your faith has to change when it faces reality. If you believe in evolution, then your faith should change in light of all the evidence against it and not one single piece of scientific evidence for it. If you are a Mormon, then the reality that the Native American Indians could not be descendants of the 10 northern tribes of Israel should bring you to change your faith. Things like Santa Claus, evolution, and Mormonism need to be rejected because their foundation is based on a faith without evidence, actually, contrary to the evidence. So if your faith does not match reality, then change your faith. But first make sure you have a firm grasp of reality.

Job wishes he had died before birth, at birth, or soon afterwards (3:1-19)

- Job cursed his conception (verse 11), his birth (verse 12), and his survival after birth (verse 12). Thus Job sees himself existing as a human being, all three times.
- His wish to not have been born negates the value of all of his good works between his birth and his current suffering. Previous pleasure does nothing to relieve present suffering.
- Job says that at death, there is no difference between kings and slaves (3:14-19). A view shared by Solomon in Ecclesiastes.
- Most commentators believe verse 8 (*Let those curse it [the night (v. 7)] who curse the day, who are prepared to rouse Leviathan*) refers to some enchanters, who thought they had power to curse certain days. To rise up the *Leviathan* is a metaphor about the cursed day. But it is not clear that this was a mystical beast. Later, God speaks of this beast as if it were still alive and well—and real (Job 41:1; Ps. 74:14; 104:26; Isa. 27:1). Most likely, this is a metaphor, not a reference to a mystical beast. For example, if I said, “He’s as big as an elephant.” I am using the word “elephant” metaphorically, not mystically.
- Verse 12, *Why did the knees receive me*, may also help date the book in the patriarchal period, since this phrase is also used of the birth of Joseph’s children (Genesis 50:23).

Job wishes for death (3:20-26)

One interesting thing here is that Job wished he were dead (verse 21), but never considered suicide or euthanasia. **He never asked his friends to help him die. He complained that God did not take his life, yet he left his life in God’s hands.** Job expanded on the phrase, *Why is light given to him who suffers, And life to the bitter of soul*. The question is, “Why does God not bring death to the one who is suffering, rather than allow him to continue on in his agony?”