

KEY

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BBC = The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament. Edited by John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews and Mark W. Chavalas. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000.

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Frame = John Frame, Systematic Theology, P&R Publishing, 2013.

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Walton = Old Testament Today. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004.

Basic English Structure

1 Afterward Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth. 2 And Job said, 3 “Let the day perish on which I was to be born, And the night which said, ‘A boy is conceived.’ 4 “May that day be darkness; Let not God above care for it, Nor light shine on it. 5 “Let darkness and black gloom claim it; Let a cloud settle on it; Let the blackness of the day terrify it. 6 “As for that night, let 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 shout enter it. 8 “Let those curse it who curse the day, Who are prepared to rouse Leviathan. 9 “Let the stars of its twilight be darkened; Let it wait for light but have none, And let it not see the breaking dawn; 10 Because it did not shut the opening of my mother’s womb, Or hide trouble from my eyes.

11 “Why did I not die at birth, Come forth from the womb and expire? 12 “Why did the knees receive me, And why the breasts, that I should suck? 13 “For now I would have lain down and been quiet; I would have slept then, I would have been at rest, 14 With kings and with counselors of the earth, Who rebuilt ruins for themselves; 15 Or with princes who had gold, Who were filling their houses with silver. 16 “Or like a miscarriage which is discarded, I would not be, As infants that never saw light. 17 “There the wicked cease from raging, And there the weary are at rest. 18 “The prisoners are at ease together; They do not hear 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 suffers, And life to the bitter of soul, 21 Who long for death, but there is none, And dig for it more than for hidden treasures, 22 Who rejoice greatly, And exult when they find the grave? 23 “Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, And whom God has hedged in? 24 “For my groaning comes at the sight of my food, And my cries pour out like water. 25 “For what I fear comes upon me, And what I dread befalls me. 26 “I am not at ease, nor am I quiet, And I am not at rest, but turmoil comes.” [Job 3:1–26]

TRANSLATION, OUTLINE AND CENTRAL PROPOSITION

ENGLISH TRANSLATION (NASB95):

1 Afterward Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth. 2 And Job said, 3 “Let the day perish on which I was to be born, And the night which said, ‘A boy is conceived.’ 4 “May that day be darkness; Let not God above care for it, Nor light shine on it. 5 “Let darkness and black gloom claim it; Let a cloud settle on it; Let the blackness of the day terrify it. 6 “As for that night, let 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 shout enter it. 8 “Let those curse it who curse the day, Who are prepared to rouse Leviathan. 9 “Let the stars of its twilight be darkened; Let it wait for light but have none, And let it not see the breaking dawn; 10 Because it did not shut the opening of my mother’s womb, Or hide trouble from my eyes. 11 “Why did I not die at birth, Come forth from the womb and expire? 12 “Why did the knees receive me, And why the breasts, that I should suck? 13 “For now I would have lain down and been quiet; I would have slept then, I would have been at rest, 14 With kings and with counselors of the earth, Who rebuilt ruins for themselves; 15 Or with princes who had gold, Who were filling their houses with silver. 16 “Or like a miscarriage which is discarded, I would not be, As infants that never saw light. 17 “There the wicked cease from raging, And there the weary are at rest. 18 “The prisoners are at ease together; They do not hear 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 suffers, And life to the bitter of soul, 21 Who long for death, but there is none, And dig for it more than for hidden treasures, 22 Who rejoice greatly, And exult when they find the grave? 23 “Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, And whom God has hedged in? 24 “For my groaning comes at the sight of my food, And my cries pour out like water. 25 “For what I fear comes upon me, And what I dread befalls me. 26 “I am not at ease, nor am I quiet, And I am not at rest, but turmoil comes.” [Job 3:1–26]

PASSAGE OUTLINE:

See sentence structure.

SERMON OUTLINE:

- I. WHY Was I Born? (1-10)
- II. WHY Did I Live (11-19)
- III. WHY Am I Alive Now (20-26)

PASSAGE SUBJECT/THEME (what is the passage talking about): Job laments his circumstances

PASSAGE COMPLEMENT/THRUST (what is the passage saying about what it’s talking about): wondering why he was ever born or why he still lives

PASSAGE MAIN IDEA (central proposition of the text): There is a time to lament and ask the hard questions of life

CENTRAL PROPOSITION (OR IDEA) OF THE SERMON: The loneliness of lament

SERMONIC IDEA/TITLE: The Loneliness of Sorrow

HISTORICAL/CULTURAL/GRAMMATICAL CONTEXT

Chapter 3 consists of a soliloquy with a lament theme.

Like Jer. 20:14-18 Job wishes he had never been born.

VERSES 1-10

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

1 Afterward Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth. 2 And Job said, 3 “Let the day perish on which I was to be born, And the night which said, ‘A boy is conceived.’ 4 “May that day be darkness; Let not God above care for it, Nor light shine on it. 5 “Let darkness and black gloom claim it; Let a cloud settle on it; Let the blackness of the day terrify it. 6 “As for that night, let 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 shout enter it. 8 “Let those curse it who curse the day, Who are prepared to rouse Leviathan. 9 “Let the stars of its twilight be darkened; Let it wait for light but have none, And let it not see the breaking dawn; 10 Because it did not shut the opening of my mother’s womb, Or hide trouble from my eyes.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

1 After this, Job began to speak and cursed the day he was born. 2 He said: 3 May the day I was born perish, and the night when they said, “A boy is conceived.” 4 If only that day had turned to darkness! May God above not care about it, or light shine on it. 5 May darkness and gloom reclaim it, and a cloud settle over it. May an eclipse of the sun terrify it. 6 If only darkness had taken that night away! May it not appear among the days of the year or be listed in the calendar. 7 Yes, may that night be barren; may no joyful shout be heard in it. 8 Let those who curse certain days cast a spell on it, those who are skilled in rousing Leviathan. 9 May its morning stars grow dark. May it wait for daylight but have none; may it not see the breaking of dawn. 10 For that night did not shut the doors of my mother’s womb, and hide sorrow from my eyes.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

1 After this, Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth. 2 He said: 3 “May the day of my birth perish, and the night that said, ‘A boy is conceived!’ 4 That day—may it turn to darkness; may God above not care about it; may no light shine on it. 5 May gloom and utter darkness claim it once more; may a cloud settle over it; may blackness overwhelm it. 6 That night—may thick darkness seize it; may it not be included among the days of the year nor be entered in any of the months. 7 May that night be barren; may no shout of joy be heard in it. 8 May those who curse days curse that day, those who are ready to rouse Leviathan. 9 May its morning stars become dark; may it wait for daylight in vain and not see the first rays of dawn, 10 for it did not shut the doors of the womb on me to hide trouble from my eyes.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

1 Afterward Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth.

Afterward = after the events of 2:11-13. See my notes on that passage to set the context of this chapter.

Job speaks in chapter 2:10 (to his wife). Perhaps he has not said a word since that discourse—his friends were silent (2:13). The words “Job opened his mouth” may indicate that he had said little or nothing up to this point.

Now Job speaks...

2 And Job said,

3 “Let the day perish on which I was to be born, And the night which said, ‘A boy is conceived.’

4 “May that day be darkness; Let not God above care for it, Nor light shine on it.

5 “Let darkness and black gloom claim it; Let a cloud settle on it; Let the blackness of the day terrify it.

Job curses the day of his birth. There is a contrast here to the creation account in Genesis 1 (darkness to light).

6 “As for that night, let darkness seize it; Let it not rejoice among the days of the year; Let it not come into the number of the months.

The “night” of v. 6 corresponds to that of v. 3b (conception).

7 “Behold, let that night be barren; Let no joyful shout enter it.

8 “Let those curse it who curse the day, Who are prepared to rouse Leviathan.

The only detailed physical description of Leviathan in the Bible is found in Job 41, which describes a powerful and fearsome creature that cannot be tamed or subdued by human power. According to this passage, Leviathan has fearsome teeth (Job 41:14) and impenetrable scales (Job 41:15–17); it breathes out fire and smoke (Job 41:18–21) and breaks through iron and bronze as though it were straw or rotting wood (Job 41:27). Warriors will retreat from Leviathan when all their weapons have proved useless against it (Job 41:25–29).

Dragon imagery plays a role in later apocalyptic texts, where God’s defeat of the sea monster represents His ultimate eschatological victory over all the forces of evil and chaos. Leviathan appears in this sense in the apocryphal book of 2 Esdras (2 Esdras 6:49–52) and in the pseudepigraphical books of 1 Enoch (1 Enoch 60:7–10, 24) and 2 Baruch (2 Baruch 29:4). [Douglas Mangum and Matthew James Hamilton, “Leviathan,” ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016)]

9 “Let the stars of its twilight be darkened; Let it wait for light but have none, And let it not see the breaking dawn;

10 Because it did not shut the opening of my mother’s womb, Or hide trouble from my eyes.

Jeremiah 20:14–18 14 Cursed be the day when I was born; Let the day not be blessed when my mother bore me! 15 Cursed be the man who brought the news To my father, saying, “A baby boy has been born to you!” And made him very happy. 16 But let that man be like the cities Which the LORD overthrew without relenting, And let him hear an outcry in the morning And a shout of alarm at noon; 17 Because he did not kill me before birth, So that my mother would have been my grave, And her womb ever pregnant. 18 Why did I ever come forth from the womb To look on trouble and sorrow, So that my days have been spent in shame?

“Hide trouble from my eyes” (v. 10). Once our eyes are open to the fallen world around us, we face a life of trouble. Job 5:7 For man is born for trouble, As sparks fly upward.

VERSES 11-19

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

11 “Why did I not die at birth, Come forth from the womb and expire? 12 “Why did the knees receive me, And why the breasts, that I should suck? 13 “For now I would have lain down and been quiet; I would have slept then, I would have been at rest, 14 With kings and with counselors of the earth, Who rebuilt ruins for themselves; 15 Or with princes who had gold, Who were filling their houses with silver. 16 “Or like a miscarriage which is discarded, I would not be, As infants that never saw light. 17 “There the wicked cease from raging, And there the weary are at rest. 18 “The prisoners are at ease together; They do not hear the voice of the taskmaster. 19 “The small and the great are there, And the slave is free from his master.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

11 Why was I not stillborn; why didn't I die as I came from the womb? 12 Why did the knees receive me, and why were there breasts for me to nurse? 13 Now I would certainly be lying down in peace; I would be asleep. Then I would be at rest 14 with the kings and counselors of the earth, who rebuilt ruined cities for themselves, 15 or with princes who had gold, who filled their houses with silver. 16 Or why was I not hidden like a miscarried child, like infants who never see daylight? 17 There the wicked cease to make trouble, and there the weary find rest. 18 The captives are completely at ease; they do not hear the voice of their oppressor. 19 Both small and great are there, and the slave is set free from his master.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

11 “Why did I not perish at birth, and die as I came from the womb? 12 Why were there knees to receive me and breasts that I might be nursed? 13 For now I would be lying down in peace; I would be asleep and at rest 14 with kings and rulers of the earth, who built for themselves places now lying in ruins, 15 with princes who had gold, who filled their houses with silver. 16 Or why was I not hidden away in the ground like a stillborn child, like an infant who never saw the light of day? 17 There the wicked cease from turmoil, and there the weary are at rest. 18 Captives also enjoy their ease; they no longer hear the slave driver's shout. 19 The small and the great are there, and the slaves are freed from their owners.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

11 **“Why did I not die at birth, Come forth from the womb and expire?”**

12 **“Why did the knees receive me, And why the breasts, that I should suck?”**

Job's first three questions here may be summarized: “Why didn't I just die at birth?” There is a progression here from the birth canal (v. 11) to knees and then breasts (v. 12a / 12b).

Note the “why” questions we ask when tragedy strikes.

“Knees receive me” (v. 12) May refer to the posture that a child would take on his mother’s knees before feeding for the first time. Or may refer to the patriarchal process of a father being given the infant shortly after birth. The child would be placed on his knees who would then bless the child.

13 “For now I would have lain down and been quiet; I would have slept then, I would have been at rest,

14 With kings and with counselors of the earth, Who rebuilt ruins for themselves;

15 Or with princes who had gold, Who were filling their houses with silver.

16 “Or like a miscarriage which is discarded, I would not be, As infants that never saw light.

17 “There the wicked cease from raging, And there the weary are at rest.

18 “The prisoners are at ease together; They do not hear the voice of the taskmaster.

19 “The small and the great are there, And the slave is free from his master.

Creation: Darkness to light to rest.

Job: Light to Darkness to rest.

See my sermon notes for a development of this theme.

VERSES 20-23

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

20 “Why is light given to him who suffers, And life to the bitter of soul, 21 Who long for death, but there is none, And dig for it more than for hidden treasures, 22 Who rejoice greatly, And exult when they find the grave? 23 “Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, And whom God has hedged in?”

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

20 Why is light given to one burdened with grief, and life to those whose existence is bitter, 21 who wait for death, but it does not come, and search for it more than for hidden treasure, 22 who are filled with much joy and are glad when they reach the grave? 23 Why is life given to a man whose path is hidden, whom God has hedged in?”

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

20 “Why is light given to those in misery, and life to the bitter of soul, 21 to those who long for death that does not come, who search for it more than for hidden treasure, 22 who are filled with gladness and rejoice when they reach the grave? 23 Why is life given to a man whose way is hidden, whom God has hedged in?”

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

**20 “Why is light given to him who suffers, And life to the bitter of soul,
21 Who long for death, but there is none, And dig for it more than for hidden treasures,
22 Who rejoice greatly, And exult when they find the grave?
23 “Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, And whom God has hedged in?”**

Two more questions which overlap (the second is a restatement of the first).

See my sermon notes.

VERSES 24-26

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB95]:

24 “For my groaning comes at the sight of my food, And my cries pour out like water. 25 “For what I fear comes upon me, And what I dread befalls me. 26 “I am not at ease, nor am I quiet, And I am not at rest, but turmoil comes.”

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [HCSB]:

24 I sigh when food is put before me, and my groans pour out like water. 25 For the thing I feared has overtaken me, and what I dreaded has happened to me. 26 I cannot relax or be still; I have no rest, for trouble comes.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NIV]:

24 “For sighing has become my daily food; my groans pour out like water. 25 What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to me. 26 I have no peace, no quietness; I have no rest, but only turmoil.”

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

24 **“For my groaning comes at the sight of my food, And my cries pour out like water.**

25 **“For what I fear comes upon me, And what I dread befalls me.**

26 **“I am not at ease, nor am I quiet, And I am not at rest, but turmoil comes.”**