

Job 3:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest.

Analysis

There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest. Job describes death's respite with poignant beauty. The Hebrew verb ragaz (רָגַז, "troubling") means to rage, agitate, or cause tumult—the wicked no longer disturb the peace. The parallel clause "the weary be at rest" uses yage'a (יָגֵא, "weary") for those exhausted by life's toil, and nuach (נָחַח, "rest") for the cessation of labor and finding peace.

This verse comes from Job's first lament (chapter 3) where he curses his birth and longs for death. His vision of the grave as refuge reveals suffering's intensity—death appears preferable to ongoing agony. Job's description anticipates the biblical theme of rest for God's people (Hebrews 4:9-11), where the faithful enter Sabbath rest. Yet his longing differs from the believer's hope; Job sees death merely as escape from pain, not as gateway to resurrection glory.

The verse's universal scope is striking: both wicked and weary find rest in death, suggesting mortality's great equalizer. Yet Christian theology transforms this observation—Christ entered death's domain to grant true rest (Matthew 11:28-30), and His resurrection promises that for believers, death is but sleep before awakening to eternal life. Job's partial understanding gives way to fuller revelation: ultimate rest comes not in death itself but through death's defeat by the Resurrection.

Historical Context

Job 3 records Job's immediate response after seven days of silence with his friends (2:13). Ancient Near Eastern laments often cursed one's birth or existence in extreme anguish. Mesopotamian texts like the "Sumerian Job" ("Man and His God") express similar despair, but Job's lament is more theologically profound, wrestling with divine purposes rather than accepting capricious fate.

The cultural context understood death as descent to Sheol, the shadowy underworld where all dead resided—not yet the differentiated judgment of heaven and hell. Job's description reflects this understanding: death brings cessation of earthly troubles but not necessarily positive blessedness. The Old Testament's limited revelation about the afterlife makes Job's longing for death more poignant—he seeks mere relief, not resurrection hope.

Later biblical revelation progressively clarifies that death, while temporarily ending earthly suffering, is humanity's enemy (1 Corinthians 15:26), defeated only through Christ. Job's words resonate with all who suffer yet point beyond themselves to the gospel's fuller answer: Christ grants rest not through death but through His victorious death and resurrection.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does Job's vision of death as rest challenge or complement Christian understanding of death as the enemy defeated by Christ?
2. What does Job's longing for death reveal about the depth of his suffering and the limits of human endurance?
3. How does Christ's promise of rest (Matthew 11:28-30) fulfill and transcend Job's yearning for relief from trouble?

4. In what ways should pastoral care for the suffering acknowledge honest despair while pointing to resurrection hope?
5. How does progressive biblical revelation transform understanding of death from mere cessation to defeated enemy?

Interlinear Text

וְשָׁבַע	רְשָׁעִים	רְדָלָה	רְצָעָה	וְשָׁבַע
H8033	There the wicked	cease	from troubling	H8033
H7563		H2308	H7267	H5117
וְיָצַא	כִּי			
and there the weary	H3581			
	H3019			

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 14:13 (Parallel theme): And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

Hebrews 4:9 (Parallel theme): There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

Hebrews 4:11 (Parallel theme): Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

Job 17:16 (Parallel theme): They shall go down to the bars of the pit, when our rest together is in the dust.

Job 14:13 (Parallel theme): O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me!