

Is Leviathan a Demonic Spirit?

By: Meeke Addison, co-host of Airing the Addisons and spokesperson for AFA

It has come to our attention that the use of the now extinct biblical creature, Leviathan has upset and concerned some of our supporters. We care deeply about for the Body of Christ and our faithful supporters. Because of this great care, we want to address this concern.

The ministry of American Family Association would never endorse or support demonic activity, oppression, or subversion. Not only is this in direct opposition to our mission and call, but it is abhorrent to God and affront to the Cross of Christ.

We believe the driving force behind what some perceive as an endorsement of an evil spirit is the result of a different and respectfully unfounded reading of Scripture. The Bible is written in various genres. Among these genres are historical narrative, which includes fact; at times, poetic expression to communicate fact; poetry that includes figurative descriptions; and prophecy. It is our strong conviction that where the Bible is literal in its expression it must be read this way.

To this end we read the account of Job as a literal account of a real man who lived after the worldwide flood and, according to the biblical account, may very well have lived during the Ice Age (Job 38:29-30). The Bible gives no indication that the account of Job is allegory or that it contains fictitious characters or creatures. Therefore, we believe God literally addressed Job and questioned him as a method of Self-revelation. We benefit from this exchange in that even today, we are able to learn of the nature and character of God.

As the account of Job draws to a close and the reader has gone on this tragic journey of loss and confusion with Job, God Himself ties up all the loose ends. “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?” God asks. “Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me” (Job 38:2, 3).

God then goes into a series of questions which serve to provoke Job’s understanding of God’s greatness. This is an unimaginable encounter. “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me if you have understanding” (Job 38:4). “Have you commanded the morning since your days began, and caused the dawn to know its place, that it might take hold of the skirts of the earth, and the wicked be shaken out of it?” (Job 38:12, 13).

God questions Job about his knowledge of the deep recesses of the sea, the constellations which He created, and Job’s ability to command flood waters and lightnings. In addition to these natural elements and conditions, God reminds Job of the creatures He has made and programmed, so to speak. These creatures have common and peculiar ways that God assures Job he cannot comprehend because he is not God. Among the animals God uses in his questioning of Job are the lion, the mountain goat, the donkey, the ox, the ostrich, the horse, and more.

Of the horse, God asks of Job, “Do you give the horse his might? Do you clothe his neck with a mane? Do you make him leap like the locust? His majestic sorting is terrifying. He paws in the valley and exults in his strength; he goes out to meet the weapons. He laughs at fear and is not dismayed; he does not turn back from the sword. Upon him rattle the quiver, the flashing spear,

and the javelin. With fierceness and rage he swallows the ground; he cannot stand still at the sound of the trumpet. When the trumpet sounds, he says ‘Aha!’ He smells the battle from afar, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting” (Job 39: 19-25). This is an incredible description of the horse! We can envision this creature because we’ve seen horses. They still exist. We can understand where there are literary tools such as personification, and imagery so that we can understand the facts. We don’t literally believe horses say, “Aha!” But when we read this, we understand that God is saying this creature He’s designed stands ready for battle. God is telling Job, “I designed this creature for use in battle.”

Finally, Leviathan is the pinnacle of God’s questioning of Job. This creature is the last and greatest of the illustrations God uses to teach Job about His greatness. Leviathan gets the largest share of time. God goes into great detail about the invincible nature of this creature. “Can you draw out Leviathan with a fishhook or press down his tongue with a cord? Can you put a rope in his nose or pierce his jaw with a hook? Will he make many pleas to you? Will he speak to you soft words? Will he make a covenant with you to take him for your servant forever? Will you play with him as with a bird, or will you put him on a leash for your girls? Will traders bargain over him? Will they divide him up among merchants? Can you fill his skin with harpoons or his head with fishing spears? Lay you hands on him; remember the battle – you will not do it again! Behold, the hope of a man is false; he is laid low even at the sight of him. No one is so fierce that he dares to stir him up. Who then is he who can stand before Me? Who has first given to me, that I should repay him? Whatever is under the whole heaven is mine. I will not keep silence concerning his limbs, or his mighty strength, or his goodly frame” (Job 41:1-12).

Now, we would have to read this presentation by God to be an exalting description of Satan if we are to be consistent with the belief that Leviathan is Satan or a demonic spirit. Admittedly, the creature God describes here is menacing and unconquerable. That is a horrible combination for man but that is nothing for God because, again, He Who made this creature must be greater than it. This is precisely what God expects Job to understand. “On earth there is not his like, a creature without fear. He sees everything that is high; he is king over all the sons of pride” (Job 41:33, 34). God is saying no one can take on this creature. Everything and everyone cower before it. If you think yourself bold enough to take it on, just you try. Let’s remember this very important detail in the description of Leviathan. The fact that Leviathan cannot be challenged by any man or beast will be one of the reasons we read about it in future passages.

In Psalm 74:14 Leviathan is mentioned for the second time in Scripture. “You crushed the heads of Leviathan; you gave him as food for the creatures of the wilderness,” the psalmist writes. At first read, this is certainly a “confirmation” that Leviathan is evil, right? Why else would God be crushing his heads? Context is key here. When we take one verse out of a passage, that verse can lose its meaning. Let’s put Psalm 74:14 back into its proper context. Psalm 74 begins as a cry for the Lord to remember His people. It’s a cry for defense. “O God, why do you cast us off forever? Why does your anger smoke against the sheep of your pasture?” (v. 1). The psalmist cries out for the Lord to remember His needy people, His “sheep.” He continues by reminding God of His relationship with Israel and the ways He has delivered Israel in the past. He invites God to see

how the enemy has come against His own people. In other words, the Psalmist is saying, “Oh God, it’s us, your people, the ones you love. Come and see what the evil one has done to us!”

Consider what the psalmist writes in Psalm 74:4-8:

Your foes have roared in the midst of your meeting place; they set up their own signs for signs.
They were like those who swing axes in a forest of trees.

And all its carved wood they broke down with hatchets and hammers.

They set your sanctuary on fire; they profaned the dwelling place of your name,
bringing it down to the ground.

They said to themselves, “We will utterly subdue them;
they burned all the meeting places of God in the land.

The writer has made the case for Israel’s desperate need and then turns again to entreating God to act on their behalf. He asks why does God hold back? Why does God allow His enemies to scoff? He goes so far as to ask God to take His right hand from the fold of His garment and “destroy them!” Incredible!

To further make his case, the psalmist reminds God of what He has done in the past. Let’s pay close attention to what we read. In Psalm 74:12-15 notice parallels to a major past event in which God took down an impenetrable kingdom which had exalted itself as mighty against God’s people:

Yet God my King is from of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth.

You divided the sea by your might; you broke the heads of the sea monsters on the waters.

You crushed the heads of Leviathan; you gave him as food for the creatures of the wilderness.

You split open springs and brooks; you dried up ever-flowing streams.

In poetic fashion the psalmist is writing of God delivering His people from a strong kingdom. From of old He has saved. This seems to be a portion of the deliverance from Egypt called to mind by the psalmist – “You divided the sea by your might.” We know factually that God parted the Red Sea and allowed His people to walk on dry land. But then He closed it up and drowned Pharaoh and all of his soldiers. In this picture Leviathan depicts a monster that, based on our previous understanding in Job, no one could subdue. The psalmist uses this reference to describe God’s might. You took down Leviathan! It’s comparable to a man saying, “I slew a dragon today.” We don’t really believe he fought a dragon; rather we understand he is expressing victory over something or someone that was impossible by all human measure.

The only way we could understand this psalmist’s reference is that we were introduced to this creature and all of its description in Job. Pharaoh thought himself to be a god. He and his military represented unconquerable might at that time and God took him and his army down.

This point of reference is what the psalmist goes back to in his own mind to recall that God is able. From this point – and from the reminder that God is Lord over all He has created, day and night, the stars and the seasons (vv. 16, 17) – the psalmist then asked God again to remember His people: “Do not deliver the soul of your dove to the wild beasts; do not forget the life of your

poor forever” (v. 19). Certainly, he doesn’t believe the people are doves nor their enemies literal wild beasts. Rather these metaphors serve the purpose of painting a picture of the great need. If we didn’t know what a dove was or even understand the way of wild beasts, these pleas would be lost on us. Likewise, if God had not mentioned Leviathan to Job, we as the reader might be confused. We wouldn’t even understand this reference.

In Psalm 104:24-2 Leviathan is described as playing in the sea. Why should we care about this? Well, again context is key. Psalm 104 is a psalm of praise for the greatness of God. “Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, you are very great! You are clothed with splendor and majesty, covering yourself with light as with a garment, stretching out the heavens like a tent (Psalm 104: 1, 2). From here the psalmist builds his case for the worthiness of God to be praised and exalted. He alludes to The Flood, “You covered it [the earth] with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains. At your rebuke they fled; at the sound of your thunder, they took to flight. The mountains rose, the valleys sank down to the place that you appointed for them. You set a boundary that they may not pass so that they might not again cover the earth” (Psalm 104: 6-9).

The description continues with detail too great to summarize here. Psalm 104 is well worth the read. In verses 19-26 we read the following:

He made the moon to mark the seasons; the sun knows its time for setting.
You make darkness, and it is night, when all the beasts of the forest creep about.
The young lions roar for their prey, seeking their food from God.
When the sun rises, they steal away and lie down in their dens.
Man goes out to his work and to his labor until the evening.
O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.
Here is the sea, great and wide, which teems with creatures innumerable,
living things both small and great.
There go the ships, and Leviathan, which you formed to play in it.

This is clearly in the context of glorifying God for the works of His hands. Leviathan paints a picture of the immensity of God’s creation. Because Leviathan is most likely extinct, we are free to imagine whatever we like. Unfortunately, some have made this literal creature a demon. But we don’t do this with the lion for example. We don’t say someone has the spirit of the lion to describe demonic oppression. But the Bible uses the lion to describe both our Savior and the enemy: “And one of the elders said to me, ‘Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals’” (Revelation 5:5). Many times in the Old Testament, God refers to Himself as a lion. Here’s one example: “They shall go after the Lord; he will roar like a lion; when he roars, his children shall come trembling from the west” (Hosea 11:10). Or what about this comparison God makes in Isaiah: “For thus the Lord said to me, ‘As a lion or a young lion growls over his prey, and when a band of shepherds is called out against him he is not terrified by their shouting or daunted at their noise, so the Lord of hosts will come down to fight on Mount Zion and on its hill’” (Isaiah 31:4).

The Lord uses the lion to proclaim His might. But then in the New Testament, the Apostle Peter uses the lion to describe our enemy. “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8). What shall we do with the lion?

We must remember that literary devices are often used in writing. Metaphors and comparisons help the reader understand. We must know the difference between what is literal and what is figurative.

There is yet one other reference to Leviathan in Scripture. In Isaiah 27, the prophet tells of Israel’s redemption. The Lord, God is going to conquer the strong force oppressing His people. This is again, represented by Leviathan. “In that day the LORD with his hard and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will slay the dragon that is in the sea.” (Isaiah 27: 1) Are we to believe that God will actually go to war against a dragon with a sword? Or are we to believe that God will be the victor over all kingdoms that exalt over His people? We could not understand this declaration if we had not been introduced to Leviathan in the book of Job. Praise God that He will deliver His people! Praise God for His might and His show of strength on our behalf.

We believe that spiritual warfare is real. We believe what the Bible says about how we battle against forces we cannot see. But nowhere in Scripture do we see that God wants us to name spirits. We can recognize demonic oppression and the specific patterns that are present when a person is influenced by evil, but there is only one time that we even see Jesus asking the name of a demon and the response is specifically given. We must be careful with how we read the Scriptures. Mythology and legend are not Bible. Only the Word is the Word and it must be exalted.

We invite our readers and supporters to research and study what has been presented here and arrive at a biblical conclusion. Our call to moms is simply a metaphorical call to be strong, fierce, and unconquerable in the defense of their children. We use Leviathan merely to paint a word picture. We regret the confusion and offense taken by some, and we hope these scriptural contexts clarify why Leviathan is an apt metaphor to encourage strong Christian moms.