

Ecclesiastes 3:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.

Analysis

All go unto one place (הַכֹּל הוֹלֵךְ אֶל־מָקוֹם אֶחָד, *hakol holekh el-maqom echad*)—Sheol, the realm of the dead, or simply the grave. **All are of the dust, and all turn to dust again** directly echoes God's curse in Genesis 3:19 (עָפָר אַתָּה וְאֶל־עָפָר תָּשׁוּב, *afar attah ve'el-afar tashuv*—'dust you are, and to dust you shall return').

This verse couldn't be clearer in its memento mori force—death is the great equalizer, returning all flesh to its elemental origin. Theologically, this underscores humanity's fallen condition: death wasn't original to creation but entered through sin. Yet Qoheleth observes only the physical reality, not yet revealing the resurrection hope. The 'one place' of death awaits all, making earthly distinctions temporary and demanding we seek permanence beyond mortality. As Job declared (19:26), redemption must come from God alone, since dust cannot save itself.

Historical Context

Ancient Israelites understood Sheol as a shadowy underworld where all the dead gathered, regardless of righteousness—a concept refined only gradually through progressive revelation, culminating in Jesus's teaching about heaven and hell.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does meditating on the dust-to-dust reality guard against both materialism and self-righteousness?
2. In what ways does the Gospel transform this Genesis 3 curse into Romans 8 hope?
3. How should the certainty of physical death affect daily decision-making and eternal investments?

Interlinear Text

ל	הוֹלֵךְ	אֶל	מָקוֹם	אֶחָד	הַכֹּל	הֵן	מִן
H3605	All go H1980	H413	place H4725	unto one H259	H3605	H1961	H4480
הָעֶפְרוֹ:		לְ	שָׁב	אֶל	הָעֶפְרוֹ:		
all are of the dust H6083		H3605	again H7725	H413	all are of the dust H6083		

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 3:19 (Parallel theme): In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

Job 34:15 (Parallel theme): All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust.

Psalms 104:29 (Parallel theme): Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust.

Job 7:9 (Parallel theme): As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away: so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more.

Ecclesiastes 9:10 (Parallel theme): Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.

Ecclesiastes 12:7 (Parallel theme): Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

Ecclesiastes 6:6 (Parallel theme): Yea, though he live a thousand years twice told, yet hath he seen no good: do not all go to one place?

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