

Ecclesiastes 5:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand.

Analysis

As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return (כַּאֲשֶׁר יָצָא מִבֶּטֶן, ka'asher yatsa mibeten immo arom yashuv lalekhet keshebbā)—echoing Job's famous declaration: 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return' (Job 1:21). **And shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand** (וּמְאֻמָּה לֹא־יֵשָׂא בְעַמְלֹו שְׂיָלֶךְ בְּיָדֹו, ume'umah lo-yissa va'amalo sheyolekh beyado)—absolutely nothing from his toil goes with him.

This verse provides Scripture's starkest memento mori regarding possessions: we arrive empty-handed and depart empty-handed, rendering accumulation's ultimate futility undeniable. The repetition of 'naked' (arom) and the double negative me'umah lo ('nothing not') emphasize absolute destitution at death. Paul echoed this: 'We brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out' (1 Timothy 6:7). Yet the verse isn't counseling passivity—it's exposing idolatry. What we 'carry away' isn't material but spiritual: 'Lay up treasures in heaven' (Matthew 6:20). The only eternal investments are Kingdom works, transformed character, and souls won for Christ.

Historical Context

Ancient burial practices—from Egyptian pyramids filled with goods to Mesopotamian grave offerings—reflected pagan belief in taking possessions to the

afterlife. Biblical realism rejected this fantasy, insisting death strips all earthly accumulation.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does the certainty of leaving everything behind change your current spending and saving priorities?
2. What spiritual investments are you making that will 'carry forward' into eternity?
3. In what ways might you be living as if you can take earthly wealth with you?

Interlinear Text

כָּאֵשׁ רַ	יָצָא	מִבֶּטֶן	אִמּוֹ	עָרֹם	יֵשׁ וְבֹ	
H834	As he came forth	womb	of his mother's	naked	shall he return	
	H3318	H990	H517	H6174	H7725	
לֵל כֵּת	כְּשֶׁבֶ א	וְיָמָּה וְיָמָּה	לֹא	יִשָּׁ א	בְּעֵמֶל וְ	שִׁילַּ וְ
H1980	as he came	nothing	H3808	and shall take	of his labour	to go
	H935	H3972		H5375	H5999	H3212
בְּיָדוֹ:						
in his hand						
H3027						

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 49:17 (Parallel theme): For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him.

Job 1:21 (Parallel theme): And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.

1 Timothy 6:7 (Parallel theme): For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

Luke 12:20 (Parallel theme): But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

From KJV Study • kjevstudy.org