

Job 14:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

His sons come to honour, and he knoweth it not; and they are brought low, but he perceiveth it not of them.

Analysis

The dead know nothing of their descendants: 'His sons come to honour, and he knoweth it not; and they are brought low, but he perceiveth it not of them.' Death severs earthly connections—the deceased don't experience their family's fortunes. This counters pagan practices of ancestor veneration and intercession. It emphasizes death's finality apart from resurrection hope. Only divine intervention can overcome this separation.

Historical Context

Many ancient cultures practiced ancestor veneration, believing the dead influenced or observed the living (widespread in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Canaan). Job's statement counters this—the dead are cut off from earthly events unless God acts.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does this truth counter both ancestor veneration and presuming the dead watch over us?
2. What does this separation teach about the importance of resurrection for reuniting with loved ones?
3. How should the dead's ignorance of earthly affairs shape how we think about those who have passed?

Interlinear Text

וְיָבֹדוּ come to honour H3513	בְּנָיו His sons H1121	וְלֹא H3808	יָדָע and he knoweth H3045	וְיִצְעָר it not and they are brought low H6819
וְלֹא H3808	יָבִין but he perceiveth H995	לְמוֹ: H3926		

Additional Cross-References

Ecclesiastes 9:5 (Parallel theme): For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.

Isaiah 63:16 (Parallel theme): Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O LORD, art our father, our redeemer; thy name is from everlasting.