

Job 24:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The womb shall forget him; the worm shall feed sweetly on him; he shall be no more remembered; and wickedness shall be broken as a tree.

Analysis

The womb shall forget him; the worm shall feed sweetly on him—Job describes death's totality with visceral imagery. "The womb shall forget him" (rechem, רֶכֶם, womb/mother) means even maternal love—the strongest human bond—erases with death. The phrase "the worm shall feed sweetly" uses rimmah (רִמָּה, maggot) and methaq (מְתָקָה, sweet), creating grotesque irony: what's sweet to worms is dissolution of human flesh. This anticipates Jesus's warning about Gehenna "where their worm dieth not" (Mark 9:48).

He shall be no more remembered; and wickedness shall be broken as a tree—Complete obliteration awaits the wicked: no memory, no legacy. The verb "broken" (shavar, שָׁבַר) depicts violent shattering, like a tree snapped by storm. Avlah (עֲוָלָה, wickedness/injustice) personified as a tree faces certain destruction. This echoes Psalm 37:35-36: "I have seen the wicked in great power... yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not." Job affirms ultimate justice but struggles with present delay.

Historical Context

Ancient burial customs feared being forgotten more than death itself—hence monuments, tombs, and name preservation (2 Samuel 18:18). For the wicked to be unremembered represented ultimate curse. The worm imagery reflects decomposition in rock-hewn tombs where bodies were laid on stone shelves.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does the wicked person's ultimate fate—"he shall be no more remembered"—contrast with the righteous whose memory is blessed (Proverbs 10:7)?
2. What does this verse teach about the fleeting nature of earthly power and reputation?
3. How does Christ's resurrection reverse the worm's victory over human flesh (1 Corinthians 15:42-44)?

Interlinear Text

לֹא יִשְׁכַּח כִּי יְשִׁיבְתִּי בְּמָתְתִּיךְ
shall forget The womb shall feed sweetly him the worm
H7911 H7358 H4988 H7415 H5750 H3808

עַלְתָּה: כְּאֵלֶּא יִתְשִׁיבְתָּר
on him he shall be no more remembered shall be broken as a tree and wickedness
H2142 H7665 H6086 H5766

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 10:7 (Evil): The memory of the just is blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot.

Daniel 4:14 (Parallel theme): He cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches:

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