

Job 26:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Dead things are formed from under the waters, and the inhabitants thereof.

Analysis

Job describes the cosmic reach of God's power: "Dead things are formed from under the waters, and the inhabitants thereof." The Hebrew *rapha'im* (רָפְאִים, "dead things") refers to the shades of the dead, spirits in Sheol. The verb *chul* (חִיל, "formed") means to writhe, tremble, or be in anguish. Job portrays even the realm of death trembling before God's power. This theological insight affirms God's sovereignty extends beyond the living world into the realm of death itself—nothing escapes His dominion. Reformed theology's doctrine of God's omnipotence includes His rule over death and the grave. This anticipates Christ's victory over death (Revelation 1:18) and demonstrates that no realm, however dark or seemingly remote, exists independently of God's authority. Job's vision of trembling shades prepares for the gospel truth that death itself will one day be destroyed (1 Corinthians 15:26).

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern religions conceived of the underworld as beyond the gods' direct control—a shadowy realm where the dead existed in diminished form. The Mesopotamian Irkalla and Greek Hades were places even gods entered with trepidation. Job's affirmation that God's power extends to Sheol was theologically radical, asserting Yahweh's unique sovereignty. This distinguishes biblical theology from surrounding cultures and finds full expression in Psalm 139:8: "If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there."

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does God's sovereignty over death transform how we face mortality?
2. What does Job's vision of God's power over Sheol teach us about the comprehensiveness of divine providence?
3. How does this passage point toward Christ's descent to the dead and ultimate conquest of death?

Interlinear Text

הַרְפָּא יִם	יְחֹל לוֹ	מִתַּיִת	מִי־תַיִם
Dead	things are formed	H8478	from under the waters
H7496	H2342		H4325

וְשֹׁכְנֵיהֶם:
and the inhabitants
H7931

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 88:10 (Parallel theme): Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead? shall the dead arise and praise thee? Selah.

Genesis 6:4 (Parallel theme): There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown.