

Job 27:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Though he heap up silver as the dust, and prepare raiment as the clay;

Analysis

Though he heap up silver as the dust—the verb **תָּבַר** (tsavar, heap up/accumulate) suggests massive hoarding, piling wealth like dirt. The comparison to dust (**אָפָּה**, afar) indicates both quantity and ultimately worthlessness—what seems precious becomes common as dust. **Prepare raiment as the clay** uses **קָרַב** (kun, prepare/establish) for clothing stacked like clay bricks. Ancient wealth was measured in precious metals and fine garments (Genesis 24:53, Joshua 7:21). Job describes obsessive accumulation—gathering silver in dust-like quantities and garments in clay-like heaps.

The verse captures the futility of materialistic greed. No matter how much the wicked accumulate, they cannot secure their future. The dust and clay imagery hints at mortality—humans are made from dust (Genesis 2:7) and return to it (Genesis 3:19). Hoarding wealth cannot prevent death or secure legacy.

Historical Context

In the ancient Near East, silver and fine clothing were primary forms of wealth storage—portable, valuable, and displayable. Garments indicated status and could be given as gifts or used for barter. Archaeological discoveries include treasure hoards of silver and textile fragments showing elaborate weaving. Job himself had been wealthy (1:3) and later describes his former generosity with possessions (29:12-17). His point is that mere accumulation without righteousness leads to loss.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does modern consumer culture reflect the same futile hoarding Job describes?
2. What is the difference between wise stewardship and the obsessive accumulation Job condemns?
3. How can we hold material blessings loosely, recognizing their temporary nature?

Interlinear Text

אָמַר	יְאַבֵּר	כַּעַפְרָה	כַּעַפְרָה	כַּעַפְרָה	כַּעַפְרָה	מַלְבָּשׁ:
H518	Though he heap up	as the dust	silver	as the clay	and prepare	raiment

Additional Cross-References

Zechariah 9:3 (Parallel theme): And Tyrus did build herself a strong hold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets.

Matthew 6:19 (Parallel theme): Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: