

Job 34:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust.

Analysis

All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust. The inevitable consequence of God withdrawing His breath: universal death. "All flesh" (kol-basar, כָּל-בָּשָׂר) encompasses all living creatures, emphasizing humanity's solidarity with creation in mortality. "Perish" (gava, עַיְלָה) means to expire, breathe one's last, or die. "Together" (yachad, תְּجַחֵד) stresses simultaneity—if God withdrew His sustaining power, death would be instant and universal, not gradual or selective.

Man shall turn again unto dust (adam al-afar yashuv, אָדָם עַל-עָפָר יִשְׁׁוּב) echoes Genesis 3:19's curse: "dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." The verb shuv (שׁׁוּב, "turn again") implies returning to one's source or origin. Adam (אָדָם, man) shares etymology with adamah (אַדָּמָה, ground), emphasizing humanity's earthy origin. This verse reveals life's contingency—we exist only because God wills it, not by inherent necessity. The doctrine should inspire both fear (we stand moment-by-moment at God's mercy) and gratitude (He sustains us despite our sin). It also underscores the gospel's necessity—only divine intervention (resurrection) can reverse the dust-to-dust trajectory. Christ's resurrection demonstrates God's power to reverse the curse, prefiguring believers' future resurrection when mortality puts on immortality (1 Corinthians 15:53-54).

Historical Context

Genesis 2:7 describes God forming man from dust and breathing life into him; Genesis 3:19 pronounces the curse of returning to dust. Elihu's words would resonate with Job's earlier lament (10:9, "thou hast made me as the clay"). The dust-to-dust cycle was visible reality in ancient Near East, where death was ever-present. Yet covenant faith hoped for resurrection (Job 19:25-27), distinguishing Israel's theology from surrounding cultures that viewed death as final.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does remembering your origin from dust and certain return to it (apart from Christ) cultivate humility?
2. What hope does the gospel provide against the seemingly inevitable dust-to-dust cycle?
3. How should awareness of life's contingency on God's sustaining breath affect your daily priorities?

Interlinear Text

יְשׁוֹב:	עַפְּרֵת	עַל	וְאַתָּה	כָּל	בְּשֶׁר	וְכָל	יְשׁוֹב
shall perish	H3605	All flesh	together	and man	H5921	unto dust	shall turn again
H1478		H1320	H3162	H120		H6083	H7725

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 3:19 (Parallel theme): In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

Ecclesiastes 12:7 (Parallel theme): Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

Isaiah 57:16 (Parallel theme): For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made.

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