

Job 7:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust; my skin is broken, and become loathsome.

Analysis

Job's graphic description of physical deterioration shocks with its visceral honesty. 'Clothed with worms' (labash rimmah, לָבַשׁ רִמָּה) uses the verb for putting on garments—his body is 'dressed' in parasitic infestation, likely maggots in his sores. 'Clods of dust' (gush aphar, גֹּשׁ עָפָר) refers to crusted, hardened dirt mixed with bodily discharge forming scabs. His skin is 'broken' (ragam, רָגַם) and 'loathsome' (ma'as, מָאָס), meaning rejected, despised, and repulsive.

This verse confronts sanitized spirituality with the brutal reality of physical suffering. Job doesn't spiritualize his agony but describes it with unflinching detail. The Reformed tradition affirms the goodness of embodied existence while recognizing the body's subjection to corruption through the fall (Romans 8:23). Our bodies 'groan' awaiting redemption, legitimating Job's graphic lament.

Theologically, Job's deteriorating flesh foreshadows Isaiah 53's description of the suffering servant: 'His visage was so marred more than any man' (Isaiah 53:14). Christ's incarnation means God in flesh experienced bodily suffering, validating physical anguish as worthy of lament and deserving of redemption. Job's corrupting body anticipates resurrection's necessity.

Historical Context

Scholars have debated Job's specific disease, with proposals including elephantiasis, pemphigus, leprosy, or chronic eczema. The description matches

dermatological conditions common in the ancient Near East where hygiene was limited. Job's sitting in ashes (2:8) and scraping himself with potsherd indicates advanced skin disease with purulent lesions.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does Job's honest description of physical suffering rebuke gnostic tendencies to spiritualize or minimize bodily affliction?
2. What comfort does the incarnation and bodily resurrection of Christ offer those experiencing physical deterioration?
3. In what ways should Job's example shape pastoral care for those experiencing disfiguring or repulsive illnesses?

Interlinear Text

שָׁ	לְ	בְּ	יֶ	בָּשָׁרִי	וְ	תֹמָה	וְ	גִּישִׁי	וְ	עָפָר	וְ	עוֹרִי	וְ	גִּעֵ
is clothed				My flesh		with worms		and clods		of dust		my skin		is broken
H3847				H1320		H7415		H1487		H6083		H5785		H7280

וַיֵּאָסֶה׃
and become loathsome
H3988

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 14:11 (Parallel theme): Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee.

Job 17:14 (Parallel theme): I have said to corruption, Thou art my father: to the worm, Thou art my mother, and my sister.

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