

Job 7:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away: so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more.

Analysis

Job employs natural imagery to illustrate death's finality: the cloud that dissipates never reconstitutes. The verb 'consumed' (kalah, כָּלָה) means to complete, finish, or bring to end. The cloud 'vanisheth away' (halak, הָלַךְ) using the common verb for going or walking—it departs permanently. Job applies this to human mortality: 'he that goeth down to the grave' (Sheol, שְׁאוֹל) 'shall come up no more' (lo ya'aleh, לֹא יָאֵלֵךְ).

This verse reflects Old Testament revelation's limited understanding of resurrection. Job speaks truth about natural human destiny apart from divine intervention—death is final, and the grave doesn't release its captives. However, Scripture's progressive revelation will clarify that resurrection isn't natural but supernatural, accomplished through divine power. Job himself will later declare faith in a living Redeemer who will raise him (19:25-27).

The cloud metaphor appears throughout Scripture (Isaiah 44:22, Hosea 6:4, 13:3) representing transience. Yet God subverts this imagery in the New Testament: Christ ascended in clouds and will return in clouds (Acts 1:9-11, Revelation 1:7). The seemingly permanent dissipation Job describes isn't final for those in Christ. The Reformed tradition affirms that natural observation (clouds don't return) requires supernatural intervention (resurrection) for hope.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern burial practices included elaborate tombs and grave goods, suggesting belief in some form of afterlife. However, theological understanding of resurrection remained undeveloped in Job's era. The concept emerged more clearly in later prophets (Isaiah 26:19, Daniel 12:2) and reached full revelation in Christ's resurrection.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does Christ's resurrection constitute God's definitive answer to Job's despairing view of death's finality?
2. What does Job's limited perspective teach us about progressive revelation and reading Old Testament texts christologically?
3. In what ways does acknowledging death's natural finality make resurrection more precious rather than less believable?

Interlinear Text

כָּל הַ	עַנַּן	וְלִי	יֵרֵד	יֹרֵד	שָׁאֵל	לֵא
is consumed	As the cloud	H1980	H3651	so he that goeth down	to the grave	H3808
H3615	H6051			H3381	H7585	
יַעֲלֶה:						
shall come up						
H5927						

Additional Cross-References

2 Samuel 14:14 (Parallel theme): For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect any person: yet doth he devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him.

Psalms 39:13 (Parallel theme): O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.

Job 10:21 (Parallel theme): Before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death;

Job 16:22 (Parallel theme): When a few years are come, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return.

Job 30:15 (Parallel theme): Terrors are turned upon me: they pursue my soul as the wind: and my welfare passeth away as a cloud.

2 Samuel 12:23 (Parallel theme): But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.