

Job 8:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Whilst it is yet in his greenness, and not cut down, it withereth before any other herb.

Analysis

Bildad continues: 'Whilst it is yet in his greenness, and not cut down, it withereth before any other herb.' The phrase 'in his greenness' (be-ibboh, בְּאֵבוֹ) refers to the plant's prime, still vigorous and apparently healthy. 'Not cut down' emphasizes that external destruction isn't required—the plant dies from internal deficiency despite outward appearance of health. It 'withereth' (yabesh, יָבֵשׁ) before other herbs that have deeper roots and genuine vitality.

Bildad's observation about premature withering despite apparent health cuts both ways. He means: hypocrites appear healthy but quickly perish when tested. However, his imagery could equally describe the righteous who suffer despite genuine faith—external appearance doesn't always reveal internal reality. Job appears withered (godless), but actually possesses deep roots (genuine faith). Bildad judges by sight rather than by God's verdict.

The parable of the sower develops this theme: some seed produces quick growth without depth, withering when tribulation comes (Mark 4:16-17). But the interpretation differs: Jesus warns disciples about shallow reception, while Bildad pronounces judgment on Job. The same imagery serves warning for self-examination versus condemnation of others—vastly different pastoral applications.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern agriculture observed how different plants respond to water scarcity. Shallow-rooted plants die first when drought comes, while deep-rooted vegetation endures. This agricultural knowledge becomes theological metaphor throughout Scripture (Psalm 1:3, Jeremiah 17:7-8).

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How do we practice discernment about spiritual fruit without wrongly judging others' hearts?
2. What does the imagery of withering 'in his greenness' teach about the difference between apparent and genuine spiritual vitality?
3. In what ways should we examine our own roots rather than others' apparent withering?

Interlinear Text

עַד נֹו	בְּ אֲבוֹ	לֵ א	יִקְטֹו	וְלִפְנֵי י	כָּל
H5750	Whilst it is yet in his greenness	H3808	and not cut down	before	H3605
	H3		H6998	H6440	
חֶצֶר יֵר	יִבֹּשׁ:				
any other herb	it withereth				
H2682	H3001				

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 17:6 (Parallel theme): For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited.

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