

Job 8:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

His roots are wrapped about the heap, and seeth the place of stones.

Analysis

The description continues: 'His roots are wrapped about the heap, and seeth the place of stones.' The text is difficult, but likely describes either deep rooting (positive) or shallow rooting among stones (negative). 'Wrapped about' (sabab, סָבַב) means to surround or encompass. If this describes the hypocrite, the point is that despite apparent deep rooting, he's actually anchored to stones (galim, גָּלִים, heap of stones) rather than soil—a foundation that cannot sustain growth.

The imagery resonates with Jesus' parable: seed sown on stony ground grows quickly but lacks depth, withering when sun rises (Mark 4:5-6, 16-17). Shallow roots among stones create illusion of stability while lacking capacity to endure. Bildad's diagnosis may be botanically accurate but pastorally disastrous—he cannot see Job's actual roots, only the withering branches.

The Reformed emphasis on invisible church versus visible church addresses this: outward appearance doesn't always correspond to spiritual reality. Some within the visible church lack true faith (tares among wheat, Matthew 13:24-30), while some genuine believers suffer trials that make them appear forsaken. Only God's final judgment separates perfectly.

Historical Context

Palestinian agriculture encountered much rocky ground (Mark 4:5). Plants in such terrain might initially grow but couldn't sustain themselves long-term. Farmers

cleared stones to prepare good soil (Isaiah 5:2), knowing that rocky ground couldn't produce lasting harvest.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What 'stones' do people sometimes root their faith in—heritage, morality, religious activity—that cannot sustain genuine spiritual life?
2. How do we cultivate deep roots in Christ rather than shallow roots in religious externals?
3. In what ways does the doctrine of invisible church help us extend charity while maintaining discernment?

Interlinear Text

עַל גַּם אֶבֶן יְמִינָה וְלִשְׁמָעָה
the heap His roots are wrapped about the place of stones and seeth

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