

Job 9:30

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean;

Analysis

If I wash myself with snow water (אֶם־הִתְרַחֲצֵתִי בַּמֵּי־שֶׁלֶג, im-hitrach'tzti v'mei-sheleg)—Job envisions extreme purification rituals. 'Snow water' represents the purest, cleanest water available in the ancient Near East—melted snow from mountain peaks, uncontaminated by earth or human contact. The verb 'wash' (rachatz, רָחַץ) with the hitpael form (reflexive) emphasizes thorough self-cleansing.

And make my hands never so clean (וְהָיִזְכוֹתִי בָּבוֹר כָּפָי, vahazikkoti vabor kapai)—Job imagines using lye or potash (bor, בּוֹר), the strongest ancient cleaning agent, making his hands ceremonially and physically spotless. 'Never so clean' emphasizes maximum possible purity. But verse 31 reveals this ritual purification's futility—God would still plunge him into filth. Job grasps a profound truth: external washing cannot address the deeper problem between him and God. This anticipates the New Testament distinction between ceremonial washing and heart cleansing (Mark 7:15, Hebrews 10:22). Only God can truly cleanse (Psalm 51:7).

Historical Context

Ancient purification rituals used water, often with soap-like substances (natron, potash) for ceremonial cleansing before worship. Snow water's purity made it especially valuable for purification. Job's metaphor shows ritual's limits—no ceremony can force God to vindicate. This prepares for understanding that 'without shedding of blood is no remission' (Hebrews 9:22)—only Christ's blood cleanses from sin's defilement.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What 'snow water' rituals or good works do you sometimes trust in rather than Christ's cleansing?
2. How does Job's insight about the futility of self-cleansing prepare us to receive the gospel?

Interlinear Text

אִם	הִתְרַחֵצְתִּי	בִּמְוִ	שִׁי לִי	אֶהְיֶה כָּאֵל	וְעָשִׂיתִי	כְּפִי:
H518	If I wash	H1119	myself with	so clean	H1253	and make my hands
	H7364		H7950	H2141		H3709

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 2:22 (Parallel theme): For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much sope, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord GOD.

Psalms 26:6 (Parallel theme): I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O LORD: