

Luke 17:37

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.

Analysis

And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together (καὶ ἀποκριθέντες λέγουσιν αὐτῷ, Ποῦ, κύριε; ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, Ὃπου τὸ σῶμα, ἐκεῖ καὶ οἱ ἀετοὶ ἐπισυναχθήσονται)—the disciples ask *pou* (where?) regarding the separation. Jesus responds proverbially: *hopou to sōma, ekei kai hoi aetoi* (where the body/corpse, there the eagles/vultures). *Aetos* can mean eagles or vultures; given the corpse context, vultures are likely. *Episunachthēsontai* (gathered together) describes inevitable congregation.

Jesus's answer is cryptic but suggests judgment's inevitability and obviousness. As vultures instinctively gather where death occurs, so judgment congregates where spiritual death exists. The comparison may indicate Jerusalem's destruction (AD 70) when Roman 'eagles' (their military standards) gathered to devour the spiritually dead city. Or more generally: judgment is as certain and conspicuous as vultures on a carcass.

Historical Context

Roman military standards featured eagles, and Josephus describes the AD 70 siege with imagery matching Jesus's prophecy. Alternatively, the proverb may simply illustrate inevitability—vultures gathering on corpses is natural law, just as divine judgment on spiritual death is moral law. The disciples' question about location

('where?') receives an answer about certainty: judgment is as inevitable as vultures finding carcasses.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does vulture imagery challenge comfortable views of judgment—is divine wrath as natural and inevitable as vultures on corpses?
2. What does this passage teach about spiritual death attracting divine judgment as certainly as physical death attracts scavengers?
3. Are you living as spiritually alive (protected from judgment) or spiritually dead (awaiting divine vultures)?

Interlinear Text

Καὶ	ἀποκριθέντες	λέγουσιν	αὐτῷ	Ποῦ	Κύριε	ὁ	δὲ
And	answering	they say	to Him	Where	Lord	G3588	And
G2532	G611	G3004	G846	G4226	G2962		G1161

εἶπεν	αὐτοῖς	Ὅπου	τὸ	σῶμα	ἐκεῖ	καὶ	οἱ	ἀετοὶ
He said	to them	Where	the	body	there	also	the	eagles
G2036	G846	G3699	G3588	G4983	G1563	G2532	G3588	G105

ἐπισυναχθήσονται

will be gathered together

G1996

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 24:28 (Parallel theme): For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

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