

Proverbs 27:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied.

Analysis

Hell and destruction are never full (שָׁאֹל וְאָבָדָן לֹא תִשְׁבַּעֲתָה, sheol va'abaddo lo tisba'enah)—(Sheol) denotes the realm of the dead, the grave that swallows all humanity; אָבָדָן (Abaddon, 'destruction, place of perishing') appears six times in Scripture, personified in Revelation 9:11 as the angel of the abyss. The verb שָׁבַע (sava, 'to be satisfied, filled') is negated absolutely.

So the eyes of man are never satisfied (וְעַיִן הָאָדָם לֹא תִשְׁבַּעֲתָה, ve'einei ha'adam lo tisba'enah)—human desire mirrors death's insatiability. John warns against 'the lust of the eyes' (1 John 2:16); Ecclesiastes declares all earthly pursuits vanity. Only in God do our souls find rest (Psalm 63:5).

Historical Context

Ancient Israelites viewed Sheol as an ever-hungry mouth (Isaiah 5:14, Habakkuk 2:5), swallowing the dead without distinction between righteous and wicked. This proverb reflects the wisdom tradition's meditation on human mortality and desire, themes fully developed in Ecclesiastes.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What desires in your life function like Sheol—never satisfied no matter how much you feed them?
2. How does consumerism exploit the principle that 'the eyes of man are never satisfied'?
3. Where have you found genuine satisfaction that transcends the endless cycle of desire?

Interlinear Text

לֹא	לֹא	אָבֹדָה	שָׁא	וְלֹ	עֵינֵי	מִ	אָנָּה
Hell	H10	are never	are never satisfied		so the eyes		of man
H7585		H3808		H7646		H5869	
לֹא		תִּשְׁבְּעָנָה:					
are never		are never satisfied					
H3808		H7646					

Additional Cross-References

Ecclesiastes 1:8 (Parallel theme): All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.

1 John 2:16 (Parallel theme): For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

Ecclesiastes 6:7 (Parallel theme): All the labour of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled.

Habakkuk 2:5 (Parallel theme): Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people:

Ecclesiastes 4:8 (Parallel theme): There is one alone, and there is not a second; yea, he hath neither child nor brother: yet is there no end of all his labour; neither

is his eye satisfied with riches; neither saith he, For whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good? This is also vanity, yea, it is a sore travail.

Job 26:6 (Parallel theme): Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering.

Proverbs 15:11 (Parallel theme): Hell and destruction are before the LORD: how much more then the hearts of the children of men?

Proverbs 23:5 (Parallel theme): Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.

Jeremiah 22:17 (Parallel theme): But thine eyes and thine heart are not but for thy covetousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence, to do it.