

Psalms 115:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence.

Analysis

The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence. This sobering verse emphasizes the urgency of worship during earthly life. **The dead** (hametim, הַמֵּתִים) refers to those in Sheol, the shadowy realm of departed spirits. Old Testament understanding of afterlife was limited (fuller revelation awaited Christ who 'brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,' 2 Timothy 1:10).

Neither any that go down into silence (kol-yoredei dumah, כָּל-יֹרְדֵי דוּמָה). Dumah (דוּמָה) means silence, stillness, the grave. Sheol was conceived as a place of inactivity, silence, and separation from active worship of God. The dead don't participate in temple praise, covenant community, or visible testimony to God's goodness.

The point isn't that the dead are annihilated or that believers cease to exist, but that earthly life is the season for active, public, corporate worship. Now is the time to praise God, trust Him, and testify of His goodness. Once this life ends, opportunity for these particular expressions of worship ceases. This creates urgency: Don't wait to worship; don't delay trusting God; don't postpone praising Him.

Historical Context

Israel's understanding of Sheol was that it was a gloomy place where the dead existed in weakened form, separated from active life and worship. This wasn't the full revelation of resurrection and eternal life that came through Christ. Jesus 'abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel' (2 Timothy 1:10). New Testament believers know that 'to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord' (2 Corinthians 5:8), and the dead in Christ reign with Him (Revelation 20:4). Yet the principle remains: earthly life is the season for certain forms of worship, witness, and service that aren't possible after death.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How should the reality that 'the dead praise not the LORD' create urgency in your worship and witness today?
2. What forms of service, worship, and testimony are unique to this earthly life and won't be possible after death?
3. How does fuller New Testament revelation about resurrection and eternal life expand (without contradicting) this verse's emphasis on praising God now?

Interlinear Text

א	ל	ה	מְתִים	יְהִלְלוּ	יְהוָה	א	ל	א	כָּל	יְהוָה	יְהוָה
H3808			The dead	praise	not the LORD	H3808			H3605	neither any that go down	
			H4191	H1984	H3050					H3381	

דוֹמָה:
into silence
H1745

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 31:17 (References Lord): Let me not be ashamed, O LORD; for I have called upon thee: let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave.

Psalms 6:5 (Parallel theme): For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?

Psalms 30:9 (Resurrection): What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth?

1 Samuel 2:9 (Parallel theme): He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail.

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