

Ecclesiastes 7:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight,
which he hath made crooked?

Analysis

Consider the work of God (רִאֵה אֶת-מְعַשֵּׂה בָּאֱלֹהִים, re'eh et-ma'aseh ha'Elohim)—The command 'consider' (re'eh, literally 'see') calls for careful observation and meditation. 'Work' (ma'aseh) refers to God's acts in creation, providence, and sovereignty. The definite article ha'Elohim ('the God') emphasizes His unique deity.

For who can make that straight, which he hath made crooked? (פִּי מִי יָכַל לְתַקֵּן) (ki mi yukhal letaken et asher iveto)—The rhetorical question ('who can...?') expects the answer 'no one.' 'Make straight' (letaken) means to set right or correct, while 'made crooked' (iveto) means bent or perverted. This echoes 1:15: 'That which is crooked cannot be made straight.' God's sovereignty extends over all circumstances, including those appearing 'crooked' from our limited perspective (Isaiah 45:7). Job learned this lesson through suffering: God's ways transcend human understanding (Job 42:1-6). Romans 11:33 declares 'how unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!'

Historical Context

Ancient wisdom traditions grappled with divine sovereignty and human limitation. Unlike pagan fatalism, biblical teaching affirms both God's absolute control and human responsibility. The verse doesn't promote passive resignation but humble acceptance of divine providence. Joseph exemplified this perspective: what brothers intended for evil, God intended for good (Genesis 50:20). The exile appeared 'crooked'—a national catastrophe—yet served God's redemptive

purposes (Jeremiah 29:11-14). Church history reveals God's providence through persecution (spreading the gospel), theological controversies (clarifying doctrine), and suffering (refining saints). The sovereignty celebrated here should produce neither fatalism nor pride, but worship and trust.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What 'crooked' circumstances in your life resist your attempts to 'straighten' them? How might God be at work in what appears bent or broken?
2. How does recognizing God's sovereign 'work' change your response to situations beyond your control or understanding?

Interlinear Text

וְכִלְ	מִ	כִּ	פָּאֵلָה	יְמִ	מְעַשֵּׁ	הַ	אֵת	רָא	הָ
Consider	H853	the work		H3588		H4310		for who can	
	H7200		H4639		H430			H3201	
לְמַתְּזֵ	אֵת	רָא	אֲשֶׁ		עֲוֹתָהּ				
make that straight	H853		H834		which he hath made crooked				
	H8626				H5791				

Additional Cross-References

Ecclesiastes 1:15 (Creation): That which is crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered.

Job 12:14 (Parallel theme): Behold, he breaketh down, and it cannot be built again: he shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening.

Isaiah 5:12 (Parallel theme): And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the LORD, neither consider the operation of his hands.

Isaiah 14:27 (Parallel theme): For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?

Ephesians 1:11 (Parallel theme): In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

Ecclesiastes 3:11 (Creation): He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.

Isaiah 43:13 (Parallel theme): Yea, before the day was I am he; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand: I will work, and who shall let it?

Psalms 107:43 (Parallel theme): Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the LORD.

Job 37:14 (References God): Hearken unto this, O Job: stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God.

Romans 9:15 (Parallel theme): For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.