

Isaiah 29:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed:

Analysis

And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed (וַתְּהִי לָכֶם חֲזוֹת הַכָּל בְּדִבְרֵי הַסֵּפֶר הֶחָתוּם, vatehi lakhem chazut hakol kedivrey hasefer hechatom)—all prophetic חֲזוֹת (chazut, vision) becomes like a sealed סֵפֶר (sefer, scroll/book). The verb חָתַם (chatam) means to seal, make inaccessible. **Which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed**—even the literate, the יוֹדֵעַ סֵפֶר (yodea sefer, one knowing books), cannot access it.

Isaiah illustrates comprehensive spiritual illiteracy. Not ignorance—the scroll exists, the learned person can read—but imposed inaccessibility. God's revelation is present but sealed, tantalizingly close yet unreachable. This is more frustrating than simple absence; it's revelation rendered useless by divine judgment. The tragedy: not lack of Scripture, but inability to comprehend it despite possessing it. Jesus quoted verse 13 when confronting Pharisees who studied Scripture yet missed its Author (Matthew 15:8-9).

Historical Context

Ancient scrolls were sealed with wax or clay impressions bearing a signet ring (Daniel 12:4, Revelation 5:1). Breaking the seal required authority. Isaiah's

metaphor: even with revelation physically present, spiritual blindness makes it as inaccessible as a sealed document. First-century Judaism possessed Scripture yet predominantly rejected Jesus, the Word made flesh.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How can people possess Scripture yet find it 'sealed'—inaccessible despite availability?
2. What's the difference between intellectual knowledge of the Bible and spiritually discerning its truth?
3. When have you encountered passages that seemed 'sealed' until God opened your understanding?

Interlinear Text

וְתִהְיֶה י	לְךָ מַ	חֵז וְ	הֵכֵל	כְּדִבְרֵי
H1961	H0	And the vision	H3605	of all is become unto you as the words
		H2380		H1697
הֵס פֶּר	חֵת וּמַ	אֲשֶׁר	יִתְּנוּ וְ	אֶל אֶת וְ
of a book	for it is sealed	H834	which men deliver	H853 H413
H5612	H2856		H5414	
יִוָּדַעַ	הֵס פֶּר	וְאָמַר	קִרְא	נָא זֶה וְ
to one that is learned	of a book	saying	Read	H4994 H2088
H3045	H5612	H559	H7121	saying H559 H3808
לֹא יֵאָדָּע	חֵת וּמַ	הוּא:		
I cannot	for it is sealed	H1931		
H3201	H2856			

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 13:11 (Parallel theme): He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.

Isaiah 8:16 (Word): Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.

Daniel 12:4 (Word): But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.

Daniel 12:9 (Word): And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.

Matthew 11:25 (Parallel theme): At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.