

Isaiah 29:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying,
Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned.

Analysis

And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned (**וְנִתְנַן הַסְּפָר עַל לֹא-יְדַע סִפְר לְאָמֹר קְנָא נָא-**) (זה ואמר לא ידע ספר, venitan hasefer al lo-yada sefer lemor qera na-zeh ve'amar lo yadati sefer)—the unlearned (לֹא-יְדַע סִפְר, lo yada sefer, one not knowing books) pleads illiteracy. The irony compounds: the educated cannot read the sealed scroll; the uneducated cannot read the opened scroll. Neither learning nor simplicity provides access.

This couplet (verses 11-12) creates a comprehensive condemnation: no category of people—educated or simple, religious elite or common folk—can access God's revelation under judicial hardening. The problem isn't educational; it's spiritual. Human capability, whether maximal (the learned) or minimal (the illiterate), proves equally impotent when God seals spiritual understanding. Only divine grace can open sealed revelation, whether to the learned (Paul) or unlearned (Peter).

Historical Context

Ancient society divided sharply between the literate elite (scribes, priests, aristocracy) and the illiterate masses. Isaiah's prophecy encompasses both, showing that neither class possesses inherent spiritual advantage. Jesus's ministry demonstrated this: religious scholars missed Him while uneducated fishermen became apostles. Spiritual illumination transcends human educational categories.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. Why does neither education nor simplicity guarantee spiritual discernment?
2. How does this challenge both intellectual pride and anti-intellectualism in the church?
3. What must happen for sealed revelation to become opened understanding?

Interlinear Text

סְפִּירָה	לֹא	אֲשֶׁר	עַל	סְפִּירָה	יֵתֶר	וְ
is delivered	And the book		H5921	H834	H3808	I am not learned
H5414	H5612					H3045
סְפִּירָה	לֹא	אֲשֶׁר	עַל	סְפִּירָה	יֵתֶר	וְ
saying	Read	H4994	H2088	saying	H3808	I am not learned
H559	H7121			H559		H3045
סְפִּירָה	לֹא	אֲשֶׁר	עַל	סְפִּירָה	יֵתֶר	וְ
And the book						H5612

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 29:18 (Parallel theme): And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness.