

Job 11:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell;
what canst thou know?

Analysis

This verse extends the incomprehensibility theme from verse 7. 'Heaven' (שמים, shamayim) and 'hell' (She'ol—the grave, the depths) form a merism expressing totality—God's understanding encompasses all reality from highest to lowest. 'What canst thou do? what canst thou know?' emphasizes human limitation. The theology is sound: God's wisdom infinitely exceeds ours (Isaiah 55:8-9, Romans 11:33). However, Zophar uses this truth to delegitimize Job's questions rather than to cultivate humble wonder. The Reformed tradition affirms both God's incomprehensibility (finitum non capax infiniti) and His self-revelation in Scripture and Christ.

Historical Context

Ancient cosmology understood the heavens as God's dwelling and Sheol as the realm of the dead—the extremes of the universe. Zophar's rhetoric would resonate with this worldview, emphasizing the vast distance between divine and human knowledge.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How do we acknowledge the limits of our understanding while still bringing our questions to God?
2. What is the difference between humble agnosticism about God's ways and cynical dismissal of His goodness?

Interlinear Text

מֵה֙ מֵשָׁאָרֶלְעַתְּנָאָתְּ
It is as high as heaven what canst thou do deeper than hell

H1363 H8064 H4100 H6466 H6013 H7585 H4100

: יְדַעַת

what canst thou know

H3045

Additional Cross-References

Job 22:12 (Parallel theme): Is not God in the height of heaven? and behold the height of the stars, how high they are!

Isaiah 55:9 (Parallel theme): For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Job 35:5 (Parallel theme): Look unto the heavens, and see; and behold the clouds which are higher than thou.

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

Amos 9:2 (Parallel theme): Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down: