

Job 15:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

What knowest thou, that we know not? what understandest thou, which is not in us?

Analysis

What knowest thou, that we know not? what understandest thou, which is not in us?—Eliphaz's rhetorical questions assert epistemological equality: Job knows nothing the friends don't know. The parallel structure—yada'ta (יְדַעַת, 'you know') and tavin (תְּבִין, 'you understand')—emphasizes comprehensive knowledge. This dismisses Job's lived experience of undeserved suffering as epistemically worthless.

The devastating irony: Job knows something they don't—what it's like to suffer innocently while maintaining integrity. His experiential knowledge challenges their theoretical system. Eliphaz represents the arrogance of systematic theology that believes it has exhausted all relevant knowledge. The book demolishes this claim: Job's experience gives him knowledge the friends' tradition cannot supply.

Historical Context

Wisdom tradition emphasized accumulated generational knowledge (see v. 18). Eliphaz appeals to collective wisdom against individual experience. The book of Job revolutionizes epistemology by validating experiential knowledge alongside traditional wisdom—even when they conflict.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. When has theological training tempted you to dismiss the knowledge that comes from lived suffering?
2. How do you hold systematic theology and experiential knowledge in proper tension?
3. What unique knowledge do suffering people possess that the comfortable cannot access?

Interlinear Text

מַה יְדָעָתָךְ אַל יְדָעָתָךְ אַל יְדָעָתָךְ אַל יְדָעָתָךְ
H4100 **What knowest** H3808 **What knowest** **not what understandest** H995 H3808 H5973

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H1931

Additional Cross-References

Job 13:2 (Parallel theme): What ye know, the same do I know also: I am not inferior unto you.

2 Corinthians 11:5 (Parallel theme): For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles.