

Job 21:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?

Analysis

The wicked ask, "What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?" The interrogative mah (הָמָה, "what") can express dismissiveness—not seeking information but expressing contempt. The verb abad (עָבַד, "serve") denotes worship and work. The noun ya'al (עָלָם, "profit") asks about utility and benefit. Job quotes the wicked's utilitarian approach to God: "What's in it for us?" This exposes religious pragmatism that values God only for benefits received. From a Reformed perspective, this reveals the natural man's transactional view of religion—serving God for gain rather than because He deserves worship. True piety worships God for His worth, not for personal advantage. This contrast appears in Job 1:9, where Satan asks if Job fears God for nothing. The book demonstrates that genuine faith persists even when profit disappears. Jesus warned against this mentality: "Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves" (John 6:26).

Historical Context

Ancient religions operated on quid pro quo principles—sacrifice to receive blessings. The wicked's question reflects this mercenary approach. However, Israelite covenant theology, while including blessings for obedience, demanded love and service from the heart (Deuteronomy 6:5). The prophets condemned mere ritual without genuine devotion (Isaiah 1:11-17). Job's faithfulness when profit vanished demonstrated authentic piety transcending transactionalism.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How do we examine whether our service to God is motivated by His worth or by what we hope to gain?
2. What does Job's continued faithfulness despite loss teach about authentic versus mercenary religion?
3. How does Jesus' warning about following Him for loaves rather than truth apply to modern Christianity?

Interlinear Text

מָה	שָׁלֵּן	כִּי	תַּעֲבֹד	כִּי	וְמִתְּהִלָּה	כִּי	לֹא	וְמִתְּהִלָּה	וְמִתְּהִלָּה
H4100	What is the Almighty	H3588	that we should serve	H5647		H4100	him and what profit	H3276	
	H7706								

כִּי	תִּפְרֹשֶׁת	כִּי	תִּפְרֹשֶׁת
H3588	should we have if we pray	H0	

| | H6293 | | |

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 5:2 (Parallel theme): And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go.

Job 34:9 (Parallel theme): For he hath said, It profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself with God.