

Job 22:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself?

Analysis

Eliphaz poses a rhetorical question striking at human autonomy before God: "Can a man be profitable (sakan, ַפָּן) unto God?" The verb implies being advantageous or beneficial. Eliphaz correctly perceives God's self-sufficiency—the Creator needs nothing from creatures (Acts 17:25). However, Eliphaz misapplies this truth, suggesting that because God doesn't need us, our righteousness is irrelevant to Him. Reformed theology affirms God's aseity (self-existence) while maintaining that God freely chooses to delight in obedience and be grieved by sin (Genesis 6:6, Isaiah 62:5). The paradox: God needs nothing, yet desires relationship. This is resolved in the doctrine of grace—God's pleasure in His people flows from His sovereign will, not from what we provide Him. Christ's perfect obedience was profitable not because God lacked righteousness, but because it accomplished the Father's redemptive plan.

Historical Context

Ancient pagan religions operated on a do ut des ("I give that you might give") system—gods needed human offerings for sustenance. The Babylonian Atrahasis Epic depicts gods creating humans to do their work. Eliphaz's question implicitly rejects such theology, affirming Yahweh's transcendence. Yet Israel's sacrificial system seemed to suggest God's need for offerings—a tension resolved in Psalm 50:12-13, where God declares He doesn't need sacrifices because He owns everything.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 – Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does understanding God's self-sufficiency transform our view of worship and obedience?
2. If God needs nothing from us, why does Scripture speak of delighting in our righteousness or being grieved by our sin?
3. How does the incarnation—God becoming man—relate to God's self-sufficiency and desire for relationship?

Interlinear Text

מְשִׁיכֵל:	עַל יָמָן	אִסְכָּר	בָּר	גֵּת	אִסְכָּר	פִּי	לֹא	פָּלָא
unto God	be profitable	Can a man	as	be profitable		H5921	he that is wise	
H410	H5532	H1397	H3588	H5532			H7919	

Additional Cross-References

Luke 17:10 (Parallel theme): So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

Psalms 16:2 (Parallel theme): O my soul, thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou art my Lord; my goodness extendeth not to thee:

Job 21:15 (Parallel theme): What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?