

Job 27:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Behold, all ye yourselves have seen it; why then are ye thus altogether vain?

Analysis

Behold, all ye yourselves have seen it (הִנֵּה אַתֶּם כָּלֶכֶם רִאִיתֶם) — the emphatic 'you yourselves' (attem kullekhem, אַתֶּם כָּלֶכֶם) stresses that Job's friends have witnessed the same realities he describes. The verb chazah (חָזָה) means to see, perceive, or behold—often used of prophetic vision. **Why then are ye thus altogether vain?** (וְלֹא מֵהִזְהָה הָבֵל תַּהֲבֵל) — hebel (הָבֵל) means vapor, breath, vanity, or futility (the key word in Ecclesiastes).

Job indicts his friends' interpretation despite shared observation—they've seen that the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer (counter to their retribution theology), yet they persist in 'vain' explanations. The doubled hebel (הָבֵל, 'become vain') emphasizes complete futility. This challenges the human tendency to force reality into preconceived theological systems rather than submitting our understanding to observed truth. Paul warns against 'vain philosophy' (Colossians 2:8), and Job anticipates this—theology disconnected from reality becomes 'vapor.' Only God's self-revelation (chapters 38-41) can correct human vanity.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern wisdom relied on observable patterns to discern divine order. Job's friends assumed a rigid retribution principle: righteousness yields prosperity, wickedness yields suffering. Job forces them to confront counter-examples their system cannot explain, exposing the vanity of theology that denies rather than engages reality.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How do you respond when observed reality challenges your theological assumptions—do you adjust theology or deny reality?
2. What makes theological reasoning 'vain' or futile according to Job's critique?
3. In what ways can we guard against the vanity of forcing God's ways into our systematic categories?

Interlinear Text

כְּלָכְלָה

H2005

H859

H3605

Behold all ye yourselves have seen

H2372

וְהַלְפָה

H4100

H2088

בְּלֹא

it why then are ye thus altogether

H1892

פָּהָבָלָן

vain

H1891

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