

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 (הִנֵּן-אַתֶּם כֻּלְּכֶם רֹאִיִּם)—the emphatic 'you yourselves' (attem kullekhem, אַתֶּם כֻּלְּכֶם) stresses that Job's friends have witnessed the same realities he describes. The verb chazah (רָאָה) means to see, perceive, or behold—often used of prophetic vision. **Why then are ye thus altogether vain?** (וְלָמָּה זֶה הֵבֵל תִּהְיֶינָה)—hebel (הֵבֵל) 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 (תִּהְיֶינָה, '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

הַן	אֵתָם	כֻּלָּם	רְאִיתָם	וְלִמָּה	זֶה
H2005	H859	H3605	Behold all ye yourselves have seen	H4100	H2088
			H2372		
הֵן כֻּלָּם			תְּהִיבֶלָם		
it why then are ye thus altogether			vain		
H1892			H1891		