

Job 33:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction,

Analysis

Elihu describes how God communicates: "Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction." The verb galah (גָּלַח, "openeth") means to uncover or reveal. The verb chatam (חֲתָם, "sealeth") means to seal or authenticate—God confirms His instruction with authority. The metaphor of opening ears appears throughout Scripture (Isaiah 50:5, Psalm 40:6). From a Reformed perspective, this illustrates the doctrine of illumination—God must open our understanding to receive divine truth. Natural human faculties cannot grasp spiritual realities without supernatural enablement (1 Corinthians 2:14). Elihu correctly identifies that God takes initiative in revelation and provides authentication. Yet he oversimplifies how God speaks—focusing on dreams and suffering as primary means while Job has been crying out for direct encounter. This anticipates Job 38-41 where God indeed opens Job's ears through direct theophany.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern religions emphasized divine communication through dreams, omens, and signs. Elihu's appeal to dreams as revelation would resonate with cultural expectations. Biblical theology affirms God speaks through various means (Hebrews 1:1) but prioritizes direct verbal revelation, culminating in Christ as the Word made flesh. Elihu's categories are accurate but incomplete.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does the doctrine of illumination shape our approach to Bible study and theological learning?
2. What is the relationship between divine initiative in revelation and human responsibility to seek understanding?
3. How has God's self-revelation progressed from Elihu's categories (dreams, suffering) to Christ as the ultimate Word?

Interlinear Text

וְבָمַדְתִּים אֵלֶּה גָּלַה ! מִן אָנָשִׁים אֵלֶּי וְיִתְהַמֵּם :
H227 Then he openeth H1540 the ears H241 of men H582 their instruction H4561 and sealeth H2856

Additional Cross-References

Job 36:10 (Parallel theme): He openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity.

Job 36:15 (Parallel theme): He delivereth the poor in his affliction, and openeth their ears in oppression.

Psalms 40:6 (Parallel theme): Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.

Isaiah 50:5 (Parallel theme): The Lord GOD hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back.

Isaiah 6:10 (Parallel theme): Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.

Acts 16:14 (Parallel theme): And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

Luke 24:45 (Parallel theme): Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,

Isaiah 48:8 (Parallel theme): Yea, thou heardest not; yea, thou knewest not; yea, from that time that thine ear was not opened: for I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb.

Nehemiah 9:38 (Parallel theme): And because of all this we make a sure covenant, and write it; and our princes, Levites, and priests, seal unto it.

Romans 15:28 (Parallel theme): When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.