

Job 34:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

What man is like Job, who drinketh up scorning like water?

Analysis

What man is like Job, who drinketh up scorning like water? Elihu's rhetorical question carries biting sarcasm. The verb "drinketh up" (shatah, שָׁטָה) ordinarily means to drink normally, but paired with "scorning" (la'ag, לָאָג, mockery or derision) it suggests Job imbibes mockery as readily and constantly as one drinks water. The imagery is vivid—Job doesn't merely endure mockery but seems to consume it eagerly. Elihu accuses Job of habitually speaking contemptuously about divine providence.

This characterization is deeply unfair. Job hasn't mocked God but has honestly expressed his anguish and confusion. Yet Elihu interprets Job's passionate protestations of innocence as scorning divine justice. The verse reveals how easily raw honesty in suffering can be misread as irreverence. It also demonstrates the danger of judging another's suffering from outside—what appears as "scorning" may be the desperate cry of faith seeking understanding. Significantly, God later vindicates Job's speech (42:7), proving Elihu's accusation false. The verse warns against confusing authentic lament with rebellion, a distinction the Psalms preserve by including cries of apparent despair (Psalm 22, 88) as legitimate worship.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern culture highly valued measured, dignified speech, especially regarding deity. Job's passionate complaints would have seemed scandalous to observers unfamiliar with Israel's lament tradition. Elihu, younger and more

concerned with propriety, mistakes honest grief for impiety. His rebuke reflects cultural assumptions about suffering—the righteous should bear it silently—which Scripture itself challenges through Job and the lament psalms.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How do you distinguish between honest lament (which Scripture permits) and actual mockery of God?
2. Have you ever judged someone's grief as irreverence when it was actually faith seeking understanding?
3. What does God's later vindication of Job teach about the legitimacy of bringing our raw emotions before Him?

Interlinear Text

מִי	גַּבְרָה	כְּאִי־וֹב	יִשְׁתֶּה	לֵעַג	כְּמַיִם:
H4310	What man	is like Job	who drinketh up	scorning	like water
	H1397	H347	H8354	H3933	H4325

Additional Cross-References

Job 15:16 (Parallel theme): How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?

Proverbs 1:22 (Parallel theme): How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?

Deuteronomy 29:19 (Parallel theme): And it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst:

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