

Job 37:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds, the wondrous works of him which is perfect in knowledge?

Analysis

Elihu asks Job: "Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds, the wondrous works of him which is perfect in knowledge?" The noun miphlas (מִפְלָשׁ, "balancings") refers to how clouds hang suspended or float. The phrase "perfect in knowledge" (temim de'im, תְּמִימִים דֵּעִים) describes God's complete understanding. Elihu points to atmospheric phenomena exceeding human comprehension as evidence of divine wisdom. From a Reformed perspective, this illustrates the argument from design: creation's complexity points to Creator's intelligence. Romans 1:20 declares God's "eternal power and Godhead" are "clearly seen" through creation. Yet Elihu's rhetorical questions somewhat patronize Job—as if Job hadn't already contemplated God's power. The questions prepare for God's speeches (chapters 38-41), which will ask similar questions with divine authority rather than human presumption. When God asks such questions, they humble; when Elihu asks them, they sometimes sound self-important.

Historical Context

Ancient peoples marveled at clouds without understanding atmospheric physics—water vapor, convection currents, temperature differentials. The mystery pointed toward divine power and wisdom. Modern meteorology explains mechanisms but doesn't eliminate wonder—how these physical laws came to exist and operate so reliably still points to divine wisdom. Elihu's appeal to nature's wonders parallels Psalm 104 and Proverbs 30:18-19.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does scientific understanding of natural phenomena affect the teleological argument for God's existence?
2. What is the difference between Elihu's rhetorical questions about creation and God's questions in chapters 38-41?
3. How should creation's complexity inform both our doctrine of God and our intellectual humility?

Interlinear Text

מִ פָּلָא זָת	עַל	מִפְלִשִּׁי	עַב	תִּזְעַ	בָּ	תִּזְעַ
Dost thou know	H5921	the balancings	H4657	of the clouds	H5645	the wondrous works
H3045						H4652

בָּ	תִּזְעַ	מִ	פָּلָא	זָת
of him which is perfect	in knowledge	מִ	פָּلָא	זָת

מִ	פָּلָא	זָת	בָּ	תִּזְעַ	מִ	פָּלָא	זָת
of him which is perfect	in knowledge	מִ	פָּלָא	זָת	בָּ	תִּזְעַ	מִ

Additional Cross-References

Job 36:4 (Parallel theme): For truly my words shall not be false: he that is perfect in knowledge is with thee.