

Job 38:33

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? canst thou set the
dominion thereof in the earth?

Analysis

God's question intensifies by addressing cosmic law and earthly governance simultaneously. 'Ordinances of heaven' (chuqqot shamayim, חֻקֵּי שָׁמַיִם) refers to the fixed laws or statutes governing celestial bodies—what we might call physics or natural law. 'Set the dominion thereof in the earth' (mishtar, מִשְׁטָר) asks whether Job can establish heaven's rule or authority over earth. This verse reveals the interconnection between cosmic order and earthly reality—the same divine wisdom that governs planetary motion also governs moral law and human affairs. The question exposes the absurdity of finite creatures questioning God's justice while remaining ignorant of the fundamental laws sustaining their existence. Reformed theology emphasizes God's sovereignty over both natural and moral law, recognizing that the same divine character that established physical constants also established moral absolutes. The verse points toward Christ, through whom all things consist and hold together (Colossians 1:17).

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern cosmology saw heaven and earth as interconnected realms, with heavenly bodies influencing earthly events. God's question affirms this connection while denying human ability to manipulate it. Unlike pagan priests who claimed to influence the gods through ritual, Scripture affirms that only Yahweh establishes the relationship between celestial and terrestrial realms.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does the same divine wisdom that governs natural law also govern moral law in your understanding?
2. What does it mean that Christ holds all things together, and how does this truth sustain you in chaos?
3. In what ways do you try to 'set dominion' in areas where only God has authority?

Interlinear Text

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|-----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| הַ יָדוּעָה | חֲקֵי וְ | אֵם שָׁמַיִם | אֵם | תָּשׁ יָם | מִשְׁטָר וְ |
| Knowest | thou the ordinances | of heaven | H518 | canst thou set | the dominion |
| H3045 | H2708 | H8064 | | H7760 | H4896 |
| בְּאֶרֶץ: | | | | | |
| thereof in the earth | | | | | |
| H776 | | | | | |

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 148:6 (Parallel theme): He hath also stablished them for ever and ever: he hath made a decree which shall not pass.

Jeremiah 33:25 (Parallel theme): Thus saith the LORD; If my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth;

Genesis 1:16 (Parallel theme): And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also.

Genesis 8:22 (Parallel theme): While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.

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