

Job 4:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his maker?

Analysis

Eliphaz's question 'Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his maker?' uses comparative language challenging Job's implied accusations against divine justice. The Hebrew *enosh* (אָנוֹשׁ) emphasizes human frailty and mortality, while *gever* (גִּבּוֹר) denotes a strong man. The rhetorical structure assumes the answer 'No'—creatures cannot exceed their Creator in justice or purity. This argument is theologically sound but misapplied: Job hasn't claimed to be more just than God, only that he hasn't committed sins worthy of his suffering.

Historical Context

The question reflects ancient debates about divine justice. Mesopotamian wisdom texts similarly grapple with whether humans can be righteous before the gods. Eliphaz's logic is impeccable in the abstract but fails to address Job's specific situation. The verse highlights the danger of applying true theology inappropriately—using correct doctrine to make false accusations.

Related Passages

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How can we distinguish between defending God's justice and falsely accusing fellow believers?
2. What does this verse teach about the misuse of sound theology to draw unsound conclusions?

Interlinear Text

יְטַהֵר יְהוֹשִׁיעַ הוּא אֵל יֵצֵדֵק מֵאֵל וְהוּא הֵאָנוּשׁ
H2891 H6213 H518 H6663 H433 H376
be more pure than his maker than God be more just shall a man
H1397

אָנָּה:
shall a man
H1397

Additional Cross-References

Job 9:2 (Righteousness): I know it is so of a truth: but how should man be just with God?

Job 25:4 (Righteousness): How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?

Ecclesiastes 7:20 (Righteousness): For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.

Psalms 143:2 (Righteousness): And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.

Romans 11:33 (References God): O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

Revelation 4:8 (References God): And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

Psalms 145:17 (Righteousness): The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.

Job 35:10 (References God): But none saith, Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night;

Job 35:2 (Righteousness): Thinkest thou this to be right, that thou saidst, My righteousness is more than God's?

Job 15:14 (Righteousness): What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?

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