

John 13:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.

Analysis

Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. Christ's response to Peter's protest introduces the pedagogical principle that divine actions often precede human understanding. The phrase **What I do** (ἐγὼ ποιῶ/egō poiō) emphasizes Jesus's sovereignty—I am doing this, regardless of your comprehension. The present tense poiō stresses ongoing action with multiple layers of meaning.

The contrast between **now** (ἄρτι/arti) and **hereafter** (μετὰ ταῦτα/meta tauta) structures Christian experience: we walk by faith, not sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). Arti indicates the immediate present moment—Peter in his pre-cross confusion cannot grasp what unfolds. Meta tauta (literally 'after these things') points beyond the crucifixion, resurrection, and Pentecost to the Spirit-enlightened understanding that follows.

The verb **knowest** (οἶδας/oidas) refers to intuitive, perceptive knowledge, while **shalt know** (γινώσῃ/gnōsē) uses γινώσκω (ginōskō), meaning experiential knowledge gained through relationship. Peter will move from confused observation to participated understanding. This parallels Jesus's earlier words: What I do thou knowest not now applies to the cross itself—disciples flee in confusion, but later understand redemption accomplished.

Historical Context

This exchange occurred within hours of Jesus's betrayal. The disciples remained confused about Jesus's mission despite three years of teaching. They expected Messiah to overthrow Rome and establish David's throne, not die as a criminal. Jesus's cryptic references to death and resurrection (Mark 8:31-33) bewildered them—Peter had even rebuked Jesus for such talk. Here Jesus acknowledges the gap between event and understanding, promising illumination would come 'after these things'—fulfilled when the risen Christ opened their minds to understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45) and the Spirit came at Pentecost (John 14:26). The early church treasured this verse as validation for their post-resurrection theological development, understanding depths in Jesus's actions they'd missed at the time.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What does it mean to trust Christ's actions before understanding His purposes, and how does this apply to suffering or confusion in your life?
2. How does the promise of future understanding sustain faith during present darkness or theological perplexity?
3. In what ways has your understanding of Scripture or God's work deepened 'hereafter'—after experiencing what you once merely heard about?

Interlinear Text

ἀπεκρίθη	Ἰησοῦς	καὶ	εἶπεν	αὐτῷ	Ὅ	ἐγὼ	ποιῶ	σὺ
answered	Jesus	and	said	unto him	What	I	do	thou
G611	G2424	G2532	G2036	G846	G3739	G1473	G4160	G4771
οὐκ	οἶδας	ἄρτι	γνώσῃ	δὲ	μετὰ	ταῦτα		
not	knowest	now	thou shalt know	but	hereafter			
G3756	G1492	G737	G1097	G1161	G3326	G5023		

Additional Cross-References

Daniel 12:8 (Parallel theme): And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?

John 12:16 (References Jesus): These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him.

John 14:26 (Parallel theme): But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

John 13:36 (References Jesus): Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards.

Daniel 12:12 (Parallel theme): Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days.