

Proverbs 30:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

There be three things which are too wonderful for me, yea,
four which I know not:

Analysis

There be three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not. Agur introduces another numerical proverb, this time celebrating mysteries rather than condemning vices. The Hebrew *nifla'ot* (נִפְלָאֹת, wonderful) means extraordinary, marvelous, beyond comprehension—the same word describes God's miraculous works (Exodus 3:20, Psalm 78:4). *Lo yada'ti* (לוֹא יְדַעְתִּי, I know not) expresses epistemic humility: these phenomena are inscrutable.

After condemning proud self-sufficiency (v.13), Agur models appropriate intellectual humility. True wisdom recognizes its limits. Some of God's works exceed human comprehension. Job 42:3 echoes this: "things too wonderful for me, which I knew not." This attitude contrasts sharply with modern scientism's assumption that all mysteries will eventually yield to human investigation. Biblical wisdom maintains that creation contains divinely-embedded mysteries revealing God's transcendence.

Historical Context

Ancient wisdom literature celebrated observation of nature (Job 38-41, Psalm 104). Unlike Greek philosophy's abstract speculation, Hebrew wisdom grounded theology in empirical observation of God's creation. Solomon "spake of trees...of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes" (1 Kings 4:33). This approach assumes creation reveals Creator—general revelation complements special revelation. The four mysteries Agur selects (v.19) represent different

domains: sky, land, sea, human relationships. Each demonstrates invisible operations producing visible effects—fitting metaphors for spiritual realities.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. What mysteries in creation still evoke wonder and point beyond mere naturalistic explanation to divine wisdom?
2. How does acknowledging mystery differ from anti-intellectualism, and how can Christians pursue knowledge while maintaining epistemic humility before God?
3. In what areas of theology or providence are you most tempted to demand complete understanding rather than trusting God's wisdom beyond your comprehension?

Interlinear Text

א ל יְדֻעָתִים: H3808 which I know H3045

Additional Cross-References

Job 42:3 (Parallel theme): Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.

