

Romans 11:34

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?

Analysis

Paul quotes Isaiah 40:13 (LXX): **For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?** (tis gar egnō noun kyriou, ē tis symbolos autou egeneto, tīc γὰρ ἔγνω νοῦν κυρίου ἢ τίς σύμβουλος αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο). The rhetorical questions expect the answer: no one. The mind (nous, νοῦς) of the Lord refers to His thoughts, plans, intentions. No human has known (egnō, ἔγνω, perfect tense—comprehended fully) God's mind.

The second question: **who hath been his counsellor?** (symbolos, σύμβουλος, "adviser"). No one advises God or informs His decisions. This undercuts human pride: we neither understand God exhaustively nor contribute to His wisdom. Paul's argument in Romans 9-11 included mysteries beyond full human grasp—election, hardening, Israel's future. Isaiah 40:13 humbles the theologian: God's ways are higher (Isaiah 55:8-9). We receive revelation gratefully but acknowledge limits.

Historical Context

Isaiah 40 emphasizes God's incomparability and sovereignty over nations. Paul applies this to soteriology: God's plan to save Jew and Gentile reflects wisdom that no human could devise or critique. The doxology answers potential objections: 'But why did God do it this way?' Answer: Who are you to question?

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does acknowledging that no one 'knows the mind of the Lord' create humility in theological discussion?
2. What is the difference between knowing *about* God (revelation) and knowing God's mind fully (impossible)?
3. Why is it spiritually dangerous to act as God's 'counsellor' by presuming to correct His revealed plans?

Interlinear Text

τίς	γὰρ	ἔγνω	νοῦν	κυρίου	ἢ	τίς	σύμβουλος
who	For	hath known	the mind	of the Lord	or	who	his counsellor
G5101	G1063	G1097	G3563	G2962	G2228	G5101	G4825

αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο

G846 hath been
G1096

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 40:13 (References Lord): Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him?

1 Corinthians 2:16 (References Lord): For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

Job 15:8 (Parallel theme): Hast thou heard the secret of God? and dost thou restrain wisdom to thyself?

Job 36:22 (Parallel theme): Behold, God exalteth by his power: who teacheth like him?

Jeremiah 23:18 (References Lord): For who hath stood in the counsel of the LORD, and hath perceived and heard his word? who hath marked his word, and heard it?

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