

Isaiah 51:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And forgettest the LORD thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor?

Analysis

And forgettest the LORD thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor? God rebukes Israel for forgetting Him—not intellectual amnesia but practical neglect. The verb shakach (שָׁכַח, "forgettest") suggests pushing God out of consciousness, allowing circumstances to eclipse divine reality. Two divine titles counter this: "thy maker" ('oseikha, עֹשֶׂה) and the Creator who "stretched forth the heavens" and "laid the foundations of the earth."

The cosmic scope of God's creative power contrasts sharply with fearing the "oppressor" (mets, מֵטָס, one who presses/afflicts). The phrase "as if he were ready to destroy" indicates that feared destruction is illusory—the oppressor's fury is temporary and ultimately impotent before the Creator. The rhetorical question "where is the fury of the oppressor?" expects the answer: vanished, gone, ineffective against God's purposes.

From a Reformed perspective, this addresses the sin of practical atheism—living as if God were irrelevant while fearing created things. Jesus teaches identical truth: "Fear not them which kill the body...but rather fear him which is able to destroy

both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28). The antidote to fear is remembering God's character and power. If He stretched the heavens, no earthly oppressor threatens His plans. This verse grounds courage in theology proper—right understanding of God displaces disordered fears.

Historical Context

The oppressor likely refers to Babylon, whose military might dominated the ancient Near East from 605-539 BCE. Nebuchadnezzar's conquests seemed unstoppable, creating existential threat to Jewish identity. The question "where is the fury?" prophetically anticipates Babylon's sudden fall—within Isaiah's prophecy framework, the seemingly invincible empire would vanish.

This pattern repeats throughout history: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome—each dominated then disappeared. Meanwhile, God's people persist. The church has outlasted every persecuting empire: Nero's Rome, Diocletian's persecutions, Islamic conquests, Soviet atheism. Isaiah's question remains relevant—where are the oppressors who seemed ready to destroy God's people? Gone, while the church endures, vindicated by God's creative power and covenant faithfulness.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What "oppressors" (circumstances, people, fears) loom larger in your consciousness than God?

2. How does remembering God as Creator practically affect your daily anxieties?
3. Where are the "furies" you feared last year? How does their disappearance teach you to trust God?

Interlinear Text

וַתִּשְׁכַּח ח	יְהוָה ה	עֹשֶׂה בָּ	נוֹטָה ה	שָׁמַיִם	
And forgettest	the LORD	thy maker	that hath stretched forth	the heavens	
H7911	H3068	H6213	H5186	H8064	
וַיִּסֵּד	אֶרֶץ	וַתִּפֹּחַ ד	תָּמָּ יד	כָּל	הֵי יוֹם
and laid the foundations	of the earth	and hast feared	continually		every day
H3245	H776	H6342	H8548	H3605	H3117
מִפְּנֵי	חֵמָה ת	הַמִּצִּיק:	כְּאִשׁ ר	כּוֹנֵן	
because	and where is the fury	of the oppressor	as if	he were ready	
H6440	H2534	H6693	H834	H3559	
לְהַשִּׁיחַ ית	וְאֵי ה	חֵמָה ת	הַמִּצִּיק:		
to destroy		and where is the fury	of the oppressor		
H7843	H346	H2534	H6693		

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 17:10 (Parallel theme): Because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the rock of thy strength, therefore shalt thou plant pleasant plants, and shalt set it with strange slips:

Isaiah 40:22 (Parallel theme): It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in:

Isaiah 45:12 (Parallel theme): I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded.

Psalms 104:2 (Parallel theme): Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain:

Isaiah 44:24 (References Lord): Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the LORD that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself;

Isaiah 48:13 (Parallel theme): Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens: when I call unto them, they stand up together.

Job 9:8 (Parallel theme): Which alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea.

Daniel 3:19 (Parallel theme): Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated.