

Isaiah 55:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.

Analysis

This verse establishes the infinite qualitative difference between God's thoughts and human thoughts, God's ways and human ways. The negative assertion ('not...your thoughts...not...your ways') creates stark contrast before the explanation in verse 9. 'Thoughts' (machashavah) encompasses plans, intentions, reasoning, and purposes. 'Ways' (derek) refers to paths, methods, conduct, and courses of action. God declares His mental processes, values, priorities, purposes, and methods fundamentally differ from humanity's. This isn't merely quantitative (God thinks faster or knows more facts) but qualitative—His perspective, wisdom, and purposes operate on an entirely different plane.

Historical Context

Isaiah addressed Israelites questioning God's ways—why exile? Why suffering? Why delay in restoring the kingdom? Their thoughts about how God should act conflicted with His actual ways. This tension appears throughout Scripture: Abraham questioning God's justice (Genesis 18), Job disputing divine providence, disciples expecting political liberation instead of crucifixion. Church history shows believers continually learning this lesson as God's ways confound human expectations—using persecution to spread the gospel, strength through weakness, victory through apparent defeat.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. What aspects of God's ways currently perplex or frustrate you because they don't match your expectations or plans?
2. How can remembering that God's thoughts aren't your thoughts help you trust Him when His ways seem mysterious or difficult?

Interlinear Text

י	ל	א	כִּי	מַחְשַׁב	וְתִיכָּם	מַחְשַׁב	וְתִיכָּם	א	וְלִי	דְרָכַי	י	דְרָכַי	י
H3588	H3808			For my thoughts	H4284	For my thoughts	H4284	H3808		my ways	H1870	my ways	H1870

נֶאֱמַר	יְהוָה:
saith	the LORD
H5002	H3068

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 92:5 (References Lord): O LORD, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep.

Psalms 40:5 (References Lord): Many, O LORD my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.

Hosea 14:9 (References Lord): Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.

Ezekiel 18:29 (References Lord): Yet saith the house of Israel, The way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?

Psalms 25:10 (References Lord): All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.

Daniel 4:37 (Parallel theme): Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.

Isaiah 53:6 (References Lord): All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Proverbs 21:8 (Parallel theme): The way of man is froward and strange: but as for the pure, his work is right.

Proverbs 25:3 (Parallel theme): The heaven for height, and the earth for depth, and the heart of kings is unsearchable.