

Joel 2:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?

Analysis

"And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?" This verse presents God as commanding general leading His army. The Hebrew chayil (army/host) can describe military forces or angelic beings. Here, both may apply—God commands locust swarms like military forces and ultimately commands angelic armies at final judgment. The phrase "he is strong that executeth his word" teaches that God's word doesn't return void but accomplishes His purpose (Isaiah 55:11). The rhetorical question "who can abide it?" expects answer: no one—apart from divine mercy. Malachi 3:2 asks identically about Messiah's coming. The answer: only those refined and purified can stand. Christ's first coming brought grace; His second brings judgment and vindication.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern warfare involved commanders leading armies into battle. Applying this imagery to God communicates His active involvement in judgment—He's not detached observer but engaged warrior. The concept of divine warrior appears throughout Scripture (Exodus 15:3, Psalm 24:8, Isaiah 42:13, Revelation 19:11-16). Jesus fulfills this as conquering King returning to defeat enemies and establish His kingdom.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does imaging God as warrior challenge contemporary emphasis on divine love while ignoring holiness?
2. Who can stand before the Lord on judgment day, and what does it mean to be purified beforehand?

Interlinear Text

מְאֹד בְּכִי כִּי כִּי יְהִי הַ
And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army H3588 great and very
H3068 H5414 H6963 H6440 H2428 H7227 H3966

גָּדָל פִּי דְּבָרָיו עֲשֵׂה מְחַזֵּק הַ
for his camp for he is strong that executeth his word H3588 is great
H4264 H3588 H6099 H6213 H1697 H1419

וְמִלְּפָאָה יְהִי הַ מְאֹד אַנְגָּלָה יְמִין
for the day And the LORD terrible and very H4310 and who can abide
H3117 H3068 H3372 H3966 H3557

Additional Cross-References

Malachi 3:2 (Parallel theme): But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' sope:

Nahum 1:6 (Parallel theme): Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him.

Revelation 18:8 (References Lord): Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.

Revelation 6:17 (Parallel theme): For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

Psalms 46:6 (Parallel theme): The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted.

Jeremiah 30:7 (Parallel theme): Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.

Joel 3:16 (References Lord): The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel.

Isaiah 42:13 (References Lord): The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies.

Isaiah 13:4 (References Lord): The noise of a multitude in the mountains, like as of a great people; a tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together: the LORD of hosts mustereth the host of the battle.

Jeremiah 50:34 (References Lord): Their Redeemer is strong; the LORD of hosts is his name: he shall throughly plead their cause, that he may give rest to the land, and disquiet the inhabitants of Babylon.