

Numbers 14:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD.

Analysis

God's solemn oath—'But as truly as I live'—introduces one of Scripture's most glorious promises. The Hebrew 'chai-ani' (חַי־אַנִי, 'as I live') is God's strongest possible self-attestation, swearing by His own eternal being since there is none greater (Hebrews 6:13). This divine oath guarantees absolute certainty. The promise—'all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD'—uses 'male' (אָלָמָן) for 'filled,' meaning to be full, to fill completely. God's glory will saturate creation like water covers the sea (Habakkuk 2:14). The 'glory of the LORD' (Hebrew: 'kevod YHWH', כְּבוֹד יְהוָה) represents God's weighty presence, His manifest excellence and majesty. This promise appears in the context of God's judgment on Israel's unbelief (14:11-23)—even human failure cannot thwart God's ultimate purpose. While that generation would die in the wilderness, God's plan to fill earth with His glory would proceed. This anticipates Christ's Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) and the new creation where God's glory will illuminate all things (Revelation 21:23).

Historical Context

This promise was given at Kadesh-barnea following Israel's refusal to enter Canaan despite God's command (Numbers 13-14). The ten unfaithful spies' report had caused the entire congregation to rebel, proposing to return to Egypt (14:1-4). Moses interceded for the people, appealing to God's character and reputation among the nations (14:13-19). God responded by pardoning Israel from immediate destruction but sentencing that generation to forty years' wilderness wandering

(14:20-35). Within this judgment, however, God proclaimed His ultimate purpose: filling earth with His glory. This demonstrates God's sovereignty—temporary setbacks in redemptive history don't derail His eternal plan. The promise has been progressively fulfilled through Israel, the Church, and awaits final consummation when Christ returns and God's glory covers the earth (Isaiah 11:9).

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does God swearing by His own life demonstrate the absolute certainty of His promises?
2. What does it mean for the earth to be 'filled with the glory of the LORD,' and how is this being accomplished?
3. How should God's commitment to His own glory shape our understanding of history and missions?
4. In what ways does this promise provide hope when facing apparent setbacks in God's kingdom work?
5. How does this verse inform our prayers for revival, evangelism, and the advance of Christ's kingdom?

Interlinear Text

אֲוָלֶם	מֵ	מֵ	אֲ	בָּיִת	יְמִילָה	אֲ	כְּבוֹד	הַיְהֵה	אַתָּה
But as truly	as I live		H589		shall be filled		with the glory	of the LORD	H853
H199	H2416			H4390		H3519		H3068	

כָּל־אָרֶץ:
H3605 all the earth
 H776

Additional Cross-References

Habakkuk 2:14 (Glory): For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

Psalms 72:19 (Glory): And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen.

Isaiah 49:18 (References Lord): Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together, and come to thee. As I live, saith the LORD, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee, as a bride doeth.

Isaiah 6:3 (Glory): And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.

Deuteronomy 32:40 (Parallel theme): For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever.

Matthew 6:10 (Parallel theme): Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.