

Psalm 103:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.

Analysis

The immeasurable height of heaven above earth illustrates the greatness of God's mercy (chesed) toward those who fear Him. This cosmic comparison emphasizes that divine mercy infinitely surpasses human comprehension or merit. 'Fear' (yare) here means reverent trust, not terror. The Reformed emphasis on God's sovereignty highlights that His mercy is great because He is great. Christ descended from this heaven (John 3:13) to demonstrate mercy's full extent—God Himself dying for sinners.

Historical Context

Ancient cosmology understood heaven as high above earth, an unbridgeable gap except by divine initiative. This imagery would powerfully communicate God's mercy's transcendent greatness to the original audience.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does contemplating the vastness of God's mercy affect your view of your own sins?
2. What does the incarnation reveal about God's willingness to bridge the gap between heaven and earth?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	עַל	כִּי מֵאַת	רַבָּה	מִן	עַל	כִּי
H3588	is high above	For as the heaven	H5921	the earth	so great	is his mercy
	H1361	H8064		H776	H1396	H2617

יראיו:

toward them that fear

H3373

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 57:10 (Grace): For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds.

Luke 1:50 (Grace): And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.

Psalms 103:17 (Grace): But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children;

Psalms 36:5 (Grace): Thy mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds.

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

Isaiah 55:9 (Parallel theme): For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Psalms 89:2 (Grace): For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens.

Job 22:12 (Parallel theme): Is not God in the height of heaven? and behold the height of the stars, how high they are!

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