

Psalms 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

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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