

Psalm 115:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God?

Analysis

Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God? This verse voices the taunt Israel faced during exile, military defeat, or national crisis. The Hebrew goyim (גּוֹיִם, nations/gentiles) mocked Israel's faith when circumstances suggested divine absence or impotence. The question 'Where is their God?' (ayeh na Eloheihem, אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֱלֹהֵי הָעָם) implies that Israel's God is either non-existent, powerless, or has abandoned His people.

This taunt appears repeatedly in Scripture during Israel's lowest moments: the Babylonian exile (Psalm 79:10), national disasters (Joel 2:17), and personal suffering (Psalm 42:3, 10). The pagan assumption was that military victory proved superior deities. If Babylon conquered Judah, Marduk must be stronger than Yahweh. If Israel suffered, their God must be weak.

The psalmist's response (verses 3ff) is devastating: Our God is in heaven doing whatever He pleases, while your gods are lifeless metal and stone. The issue isn't God's absence but His sovereign purposes, which transcend human understanding. This anticipates Christ on the cross, where mockers said, 'He saved others; himself he cannot save' (Matthew 27:42)—mistaking divine purpose for divine weakness.

Historical Context

Psalm 115 belongs to the Egyptian Hallel, recited at major festivals (Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles). The historical context likely reflects post-exilic struggles when the returned remnant faced opposition, economic hardship, and questions

about God's promises. The rebuilt temple was modest compared to Solomon's glory, leading scoffers to mock (Haggai 2:3). Jewish communities scattered among pagan nations constantly heard this taunt. The psalm responds with theological clarity: visible circumstances don't determine theological truth.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. When has your faith been challenged by the question 'Where is your God?' either from others or your own heart during suffering?
2. How does Psalm 115's answer—God is sovereign in heaven, doing His pleasure—comfort or challenge you during trials?
3. In what ways do modern secular assumptions ('If God existed, He would prevent suffering') echo the ancient pagan taunt?

Interlinear Text

וְאָמַרְתִּי	בַּגּוּ	אֵת
H4100	H559	H1471
say	Wherefore should the heathen	

אֵלֶּה יְהִי מִתְּנִשְׁאָלָה:

Where is now their God

H430

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 42:3 (References God): My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?

Psalms 79:10 (References God): Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God? let him be known among the heathen in our sight by the revenging of the blood of thy servants which is shed.

Psalms 42:10 (References God): As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?

Exodus 32:12 (Parallel theme): Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people.

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