

Psalm 123:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens.

Analysis

The psalm opens with eyes lifted heavenward: 'Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens.' The upward gaze signifies dependence, expectation, and worship. Eyes naturally turn to sources of help; lifting them to heaven acknowledges that ultimate help comes not from horizontal sources (other people, circumstances) but from God alone. The phrase 'that dwellest in the heavens' emphasizes God's transcendence, sovereignty, and authority. He sits enthroned above earthly chaos, unaffected by circumstances that overwhelm His people. This posture contrasts with looking down in despair or looking around in anxiety. Looking up requires faith - trusting an unseen God rather than visible realities. The psalmist models prayer as realigning perspective from earthly troubles to the heavenly Sovereign.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern peoples often conceived of deities as dwelling on mountains or in the heavens. Biblical theology affirms God's transcendence while also revealing His immanence. For Israelites journeying to Jerusalem (situated on a mountain), the physical ascent mirrored spiritual ascent toward God who dwells on high.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What does the posture of lifting eyes to heaven reveal about the nature of faith?
2. How does focusing on God's transcendent position affect our earthly troubles?
3. In what circumstances do you find yourself looking down or around rather than up?
4. How does Jesus' instruction to 'look up, lift up your heads' (Luke 21:28) connect to this psalm?
5. What spiritual disciplines help maintain an upward gaze toward God?

Interlinear Text

אָלֵין	בְּשָׁמִים:	הַשְׁבֵּב	עִין	אַתָּה	בְּשָׁאָתִי	עִזִּים
H413	Unto thee lift I up	H853	mine eyes	O thou that dwellest	in the heavens	
	H5375		H5869	H3427		H8064

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 121:1 (Parallel theme): I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.

Psalms 141:8 (Parallel theme): But mine eyes are unto thee, O GOD the Lord: in thee is my trust; leave not my soul destitute.

Psalms 25:15 (Parallel theme): Mine eyes are ever toward the LORD; for he shall pluck my feet out of the net.

Psalms 2:4 (Parallel theme): He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.

Luke 18:13 (Parallel theme): And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

Psalms 11:4 (Parallel theme): The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD'S throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men.

Psalms 120:1 (Parallel theme): In my distress I cried unto the LORD, and he heard me.

Psalms 132:1 (Parallel theme): LORD, remember David, and all his afflictions:

Matthew 6:9 (Parallel theme): After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

Isaiah 57:15 (Parallel theme): For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

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