

Psalm 123:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us: for we are exceedingly filled with contempt.

Analysis

The cry for mercy intensifies: 'Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us: for we are exceedingly filled with contempt.' The double plea 'have mercy...have mercy' expresses desperation. Hebrew 'chanan' (have mercy) denotes gracious favor undeserved by the recipient. The reason follows: 'we are exceedingly filled with contempt.' The word 'exceedingly' (Hebrew 'rav') means abundant, great, much - contempt has reached intolerable levels. 'Contempt' involves scorn, mockery, and disdain - being treated as worthless or despicable. To be 'filled' with contempt suggests saturation; the psalmist can endure no more. This verse reveals that the need for mercy stems from social oppression and mockery. The appeal to God acknowledges that human vindication is impossible - only divine mercy can relieve the burden of contempt.

Historical Context

Israelites faced contempt from surrounding nations, particularly during periods of weakness, exile, or subjugation. Mockery attacked not just individual dignity but covenant identity - enemies scorned both Israel and Israel's God. Contempt from the proud (v. 4) was especially painful because it came from those who should have been humbled.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. Why does the psalmist cry for mercy twice rather than once?
2. How does contempt from others create spiritual crisis requiring divine intervention?
3. What does it mean to be 'filled' with contempt, and how does this affect faith?
4. How did Jesus experience contempt, and how does His experience comfort those who face mockery?
5. What is the proper response to contempt - human vindication or appeal to divine mercy?

Interlinear Text

רָאֵנָה	יְהִי הָ	רָאֵנָה	רָאֵנָה	כִּי	כִּי	כִּי
Have mercy	upon us O LORD	Have mercy	upon us	for we are exceedingly		
H2603	H3068	H2603	H3588		H7227	
שָׁבֵן	בָּלָם					
filled	with contempt					
H7646	H937					

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 57:1 (Grace): Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast.