

Psalm 124:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us:

Analysis

The imagined catastrophe is described: 'Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us.' The word 'then' draws the inevitable conclusion - without God, destruction would have followed. The imagery 'swallowed us up quick' (alive) suggests sudden, complete consumption, like a monster devouring prey whole. The Hebrew 'chay' (quick/alive) emphasizes they would have been consumed while still living - not merely defeated but obliterated. The phrase 'when their wrath was kindled' pictures rage as fire, burning hot against Israel. Enemies weren't merely strategic opponents but consumed with fury. This verse escalates the threat from attack (v. 2) to annihilation - total, immediate destruction. The vivid imagery makes divine deliverance more remarkable by emphasizing how close Israel came to complete destruction.

Historical Context

Israel faced several near-annihilation moments: Egyptian slavery, Amalekite attacks (Exodus 17), Assyrian invasion, Babylonian conquest, Persian Haman's plot (Esther), and others. The imagery of being 'swallowed alive' recalls Korah's judgment (Numbers 16:30-33) and anticipates Jonah's experience. The language reflects ancient Near Eastern combat where victors often attempted complete extermination of enemies.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. What does the imagery of being 'swallowed alive' communicate about the nature of the threat?
2. How does recognizing enemy 'wrath' help us understand that opposition is often personal, not merely political?
3. In what ways do believers today face threats of being 'swallowed up' by hostile forces?
4. How does vividly imagining what would have happened without God deepen gratitude for deliverance?
5. What New Testament passages describe spiritual threats in similar terms of consumption or destruction?

Interlinear Text

וְכֹלֶב אָזְרִים	בְּלֹעַ וְכֹלֶב	בְּקַר וְתַּ	אָפֶן	בְּנָה:
Then	quick	they had swallowed us up	was kindled	when their wrath
H233	H2416	H1104	H2734	H639

Additional Cross-References

Acts 9:2 (Parallel theme): And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

Psalms 57:3 (Parallel theme): He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. Selah. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth.

Psalms 35:25 (Parallel theme): Let them not say in their hearts, Ah, so would we have it: let them not say, We have swallowed him up.

Matthew 2:16 (Parallel theme): Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.

Daniel 3:19 (Parallel theme): Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated.