

Psalm 130:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?

Analysis

A rhetorical question poses universal human condition: 'If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O LORD, who shall stand?' The conditional 'if' introduces a hypothetical that assumes reality - God COULD mark (record, observe, hold accountable for) sins. The word 'mark' (Hebrew 'shamar') means to keep, guard, preserve - here suggesting maintaining a record of wrongs. 'Iniquities' (Hebrew 'avonot') refers to perversity, guilt, moral twistedness - serious sins, not mere mistakes. The repetition 'LORD...O LORD' emphasizes the one to whom the question is addressed. The question 'who shall stand?' expects the answer 'no one.' To 'stand' means to remain upright, be vindicated, survive judgment - if God strictly marks all sin, no human can remain innocent or acceptable. This verse establishes the impossibility of salvation by works or human merit. All need mercy.

Historical Context

The rhetorical question reflects biblical anthropology - all have sinned (1 Kings 8:46; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:23). If God judged strictly according to law without grace, none could be saved. This theological truth undergirds the need for atonement, sacrifice, and ultimately Christ's work. The question prepares for verse 4's declaration of forgiveness.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. Why does the psalmist ask this as question rather than stating 'no one can stand'?
2. What does it mean for God to 'mark' iniquities versus forgive them?
3. How does this verse expose the futility of attempting to earn salvation through works?
4. What is the significance of 'who shall stand' - what would standing before God require?
5. How does recognizing universal guilt drive us to seek mercy rather than justice?

Interlinear Text

אָם	עָוֹן	וְתַ	תְּשֻׁמֶּר	תְּ	הִ	אָדָּנָה	מִ	יְעַמֵּד:
H518	iniquities		shouldest mark	If thou	LORD	O Lord	H4310	who shall stand
	H5771		H8104	H3050		H136		H5975

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 143:2 (Parallel theme): And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.

Psalms 76:7 (Parallel theme): Thou, even thou, art to be feared: and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?

Job 10:14 (Parallel theme): If I sin, then thou markest me, and thou wilt not acquit me from mine iniquity.

Revelation 6:17 (Parallel theme): For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

Isaiah 53:6 (References Lord): All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Job 15:14 (Parallel theme): What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?

Job 9:20 (Parallel theme): If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse.

Nahum 1:6 (Parallel theme): Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him.

Malachi 3:2 (Parallel theme): But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' sope:

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