

Psalm 138:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.

Analysis

I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name. This verse deepens David's worship by specifying its direction, motivation, and remarkable theological claim about God's word.

"I will worship toward thy holy temple" אֶל-הַיכָּל קָשָׁח (eshtachaveh el-heikhal qodshekha) indicates orientation toward God's dwelling place. Shachah means to bow down, prostrate oneself—physical posture expressing spiritual submission. The temple represented God's presence among His people, the meeting place between holy God and sinful humanity. Facing the temple in prayer acknowledged God's holiness and covenant faithfulness (see 1 Kings 8:29-30, Daniel 6:10).

"Praise thy name" emphasizes God's revealed character. In Hebrew thought, a name wasn't merely a label but expressed essential nature. God's name encompasses His attributes, actions, and covenant relationship with His people. To praise God's name is to celebrate who He has revealed Himself to be.

"For thy lovingkindness" (בָּרוּךְ חִסְדֶּךָ/chasdekha) uses chesed, one of the Old Testament's richest theological terms—covenant love, loyal love, steadfast mercy, unfailing kindness. This isn't sentimental affection but committed, faithful love rooted in covenant promises. God's chesed endures forever, remaining faithful even when

His people prove faithless.

"And for thy truth" (אמתך/amitekha) from emet means faithfulness, reliability, truth, stability. God's truth refers to His absolute trustworthiness—He cannot lie, He keeps His promises, His word is completely reliable. While human words often prove empty, God's word is truth itself.

The verse's climax is astonishing: "thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name" (על-כל-שםך עידתך/higdalta al-kol-shimkha imratekha). God has exalted, elevated, magnified His word even above His name—His revealed character. This emphasizes the supreme authority and reliability of God's word. When God speaks, His reputation is at stake. He has so committed Himself to His promises that His word becomes the ultimate expression of His character.

Historical Context

David wrote this psalm during a period when the temple had not yet been built—Solomon would later construct it. However, the tabernacle and ark of the covenant represented God's presence. David's desire to build a permanent temple for God (2 Samuel 7) reflected his deep reverence for God's dwelling place among His people.

The concept of worshiping toward God's holy place becomes significant in later biblical history. When Solomon dedicated the temple, he prayed that when God's people pray toward the temple, God would hear from heaven (1 Kings 8:29-30). During Babylonian exile, Daniel opened his windows toward Jerusalem to pray (Daniel 6:10), maintaining connection with God's dwelling place even in captivity.

God's chesed (lovingkindness) and emet (truth/faithfulness) frequently appear together in Scripture, representing God's covenant character. Exodus 34:6 proclaims: "The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." These attributes define God's covenant relationship with Israel.

The remarkable statement that God has magnified His word above His name speaks to the absolute reliability of divine promises. God has so bound Himself to

His word that His reputation rests on keeping His promises. This anticipates the New Testament revelation of Christ as the Word made flesh (John 1:14)—the ultimate magnification of God's word. Hebrews 1:1-3 declares that Christ is the supreme revelation of God, the exact representation of His nature.

Throughout church history, this verse has grounded confidence in Scripture's authority. If God has exalted His word above even His name, then Scripture deserves supreme trust and submission. The Reformation's sola scriptura principle—Scripture alone as final authority—reflects this verse's theology.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. What does it mean that God has 'magnified His word above all His name,' and how does this establish Scripture's authority?
2. How do God's lovingkindness (*chesed*) and truth (*emet*) work together in His dealings with humanity?
3. What is the significance of worshiping 'toward' God's holy temple—how does physical orientation in prayer relate to spiritual focus?
4. How does Christ as the Word made flesh (John 1:14) represent the ultimate fulfillment of God magnifying His word?
5. In what ways might believers today fail to honor God's word as supreme authority, and how does this verse call us to biblical fidelity?

Interlinear Text

אָשְׁתָּחֹן ה	אל היכל קדשׁ	ה וְאַתָּה	שׁ מֶלֶךְ
I will worship	H413 temple toward thy holy and praise	H853 above all thy name	H8034

הָגַד לְתָה אַמְתָה בְּ יְלִיל מִסְדָּג הָלֵל
H5921 for thy lovingkindness H5921 and for thy truth H3588 for thou hast magnified
H2617 H571 H1431

אָמְרָתֶךָ:	שֶׁ מִתְ	כָּל	עַל
H5921	H3605	above all thy name	thy word

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 5:18 (Word): For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

Isaiah 42:21 (Word): The LORD is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honourable.

Psalms 56:10 (Word): In God will I praise his word: in the LORD will I praise his word.

Matthew 24:35 (Word): Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

Psalms 5:7 (Holy): But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy: and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple.

Psalms 28:2 (Holy): Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee, when I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle.

Psalms 56:4 (Word): In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.

John 1:17 (Word): For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 63:7 (Resurrection): I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the LORD, and the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses.

Psalms 99:5 (Holy): Exalt ye the LORD our God, and worship at his footstool; for he is holy.

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org