

Psalm 138:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the LORD: for great is the glory of the LORD.

Analysis

Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the LORD: for great is the glory of the LORD. This verse continues describing the universal worship anticipated in v. 4, specifying that kings won't merely praise grudgingly but will "sing" (yashiru, יִשְׁרָא, —joyful, exuberant expression. Shir (שִׁיר) means "to sing," often in context of worship or celebration. Singing represents heartfelt, voluntary, enthusiastic praise, not coerced acknowledgment. Former opponents of God become glad worshipers.

"In the ways of the LORD" (be-darkhei YHWH, בְּדַרְכֵי יְהָוָה) describes what they sing about. Derekh (דֶּרֶךְ, "way") refers to God's actions, methods, character, and revealed will—how He operates in history. The plural "ways" encompasses multiple aspects: His providence, justice, mercy, faithfulness, wisdom. Kings who once walked their own ways now celebrate God's ways as superior. This recalls Moses's request: "shew me now thy way" (Exodus 33:13) and Israel's confession: "thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary" (Psalm 77:13).

"For great is the glory of the LORD" (ki-gadol kevod YHWH, קַיְגָדוֹל קְבוֹד יְהָוָה) provides the reason for singing. Ki (כִּי, "for, because") introduces explanatory clause. Gadol (גָדוֹל, "great") emphasizes magnitude, excellence, supremacy. Kevod (כְּבוֹד, "glory") is God's weighty, majestic, visible splendor—His revealed character and presence. The greatness of God's glory surpasses all earthly glory, rendering kings' glory trivial by comparison. When kings recognize God's superior glory, their appropriate response is worship. Paul echoes this: "that at the name of Jesus every

knee should bow... and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:10-11).

Historical Context

The ancient Near Eastern context makes this vision revolutionary. Kings in that world claimed divine status or at minimum supreme authority—pharaohs were gods incarnate, Mesopotamian rulers were gods' representatives, Persian shahs held absolute power. The concept of all kings submitting to Yahweh and singing His praise contradicted contemporary royal ideology. Yet biblical prophets consistently proclaimed Yahweh's supremacy over all earthly powers (Psalm 2:10-12, 47:2, 7-9, 96:10, 99:1-2). Daniel demonstrated this when Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged "the God of heaven" as supreme (Daniel 4:34-37). The Book of Revelation depicts this eschatologically: "the kings of the earth" bring their glory into the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:24), having abandoned rebellion for worship. History's trajectory moves toward universal acknowledgment of God's sovereignty.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What does it mean to 'sing in the ways of the LORD,' and how is this different from merely acknowledging God's existence?
2. How does recognizing the greatness of God's glory relativize earthly power, success, and human glory?
3. What will it be like when all earthly authorities joyfully worship God, and how does this future hope impact Christian engagement with political powers now?

Interlinear Text

כִּי־יְשִׁירוּ בַּדָּרָקִים יְהִיה־כִּי־
Yea they shall sing in the ways of the LORD H3588
H7891 H1870 H3068 H1419 H3519

יְהִיה־
of the LORD
H3068

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 4:11 (Glory): Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

Psalms 21:5 (Glory): His glory is great in thy salvation: honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him.

Revelation 7:12 (Glory): Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

Malachi 1:11 (Sin): For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts.

Revelation 19:1 (Glory): And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:

Exodus 15:11 (Glory): Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?

Ephesians 1:12 (Glory): That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

John 17:1 (Parallel theme): These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:

2 Corinthians 4:6 (Glory): For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

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