

Psalm 145:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable.

Analysis

This verse emphasizes God's incomparable greatness: 'Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised: and his greatness is unsearchable.' The repetition of 'great' and 'greatly' hammers home the central affirmation. 'Greatly to be praised' indicates that praise itself is an appropriate human response proportional to God's nature. The concluding phrase 'his greatness is unsearchable' (Hebrew 'ein cheker') means incomprehensible, beyond investigation or measurement. This creates a paradox: God is so great that His greatness cannot be fully fathomed by finite minds. Yet the psalm calls for perpetual praise of this incomprehensible greatness. The verse establishes that praise does not require complete understanding - indeed, God's infinite nature exceeds human categories. The theological implication is that worship of God is appropriate regardless of whether we comprehend His full nature. This liberates prayer from the burden of needing to fully explain or justify God.

Historical Context

In ancient Near Eastern royal ideology, king-worship involved formal declarations of the monarch's greatness and power. This psalm subversively redirects such language toward YHWH, establishing that God's greatness infinitely exceeds that of any earthly ruler. During the exile, when Israel had lost political independence and their temple was destroyed, maintaining theological affirmation of God's greatness provided spiritual continuity. The concept of God's 'unsearchable greatness' appears throughout wisdom literature, particularly in Job (chapters

36-37) and in the prophetic vision of Isaiah (chapter 40). In the Second Temple period, when Israel remained under Persian, Hellenistic, and then Roman rule, the affirmation that God's greatness is 'unsearchable' meant that imperial power and political circumstances could not diminish theological truth. The verse provides hope in circumstances where God's power is not evident in military or political terms.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does acknowledging that God's greatness is 'unsearchable' affect our confidence in prayer and petition?
2. Why is perpetual praise ('greatly to be praised') called for in response to incomprehensible greatness?
3. In what ways does this recognition of God's transcendent greatness challenge anthropomorphic understandings of God?
4. How might the affirmation of God's unsearchable greatness provide comfort in circumstances where divine action is not evident?
5. What is the relationship between recognizing God's incomprehensibility and claiming to know His will and character?

Interlinear Text

אֵל יְהוָה מְהֻלָּל מְאֹד לְגָדְלָתִים!
Great is the LORD to be praised and greatly and his greatness H369
H1419 H3068 H1984 H3966 H1420

מְאֹד
is unsearchable
H2714

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 147:5 (References Lord): Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite.

Romans 11:33 (Parallel theme): O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

Job 5:9 (Parallel theme): Which doeth great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number:

Isaiah 40:28 (References Lord): Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.

Psalms 139:6 (Parallel theme): Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.

Job 9:10 (Parallel theme): Which doeth great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number.

Psalms 48:1 (Resurrection): Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness.

Psalms 96:4 (Resurrection): For the LORD is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods.

Job 26:14 (Parallel theme): Lo, these are parts of his ways: but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand?

Revelation 15:3 (References Lord): And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.