

Psalms 2:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

Analysis

This verse captures the paradox of proper worship: fear and joy coexisting. "Serve" (עָבַד/ivdu) means worship through service, submission, and obedience—not casual friendship but recognition of God's holiness and sovereignty. "Fear" (יִרְאַה/yir'ah) denotes reverential awe, not terror, but profound respect for God's majesty and justice. Yet simultaneously "rejoice" (גִּיל/gilu)—exult, be glad—with "trembling" (רָעָדָה/re'adah), quaking or trembling. The paradox reflects biblical worship: we approach the consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29) with confidence through Christ's blood (Hebrews 10:19), simultaneously awed by holiness and welcomed by grace. This follows the psalm's warning to rebellious nations and kings—submit joyfully before it's too late.

Historical Context

Psalm 2 is a royal coronation psalm, likely used when Davidic kings were installed. The ancient Near East saw frequent rebellions when kingdoms changed hands—vassal nations testing new rulers. Against earthly power struggles, the psalm asserts Yahweh's sovereignty and His anointed king's authority. By the Second Temple period, Jews understood Psalm 2 messianically (referenced in Acts 4:25-26, Hebrews 1:5, 5:5, Revelation 2:27). The early church saw Christ as the ultimate Anointed One whom nations either serve with fear or face in judgment.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How can you cultivate both joyful celebration and reverent fear in your worship of God?
2. What does "serving the LORD with fear" look like practically in daily life decisions and priorities?

Interlinear Text

וְעָבַד	אֶת	יְהוָה	בְּיִרְאָה	וּבְשִׂמְחָה	וּבְרָעָדָה:
Serve		the LORD	with fear	and rejoice	with trembling
H5647	H853	H3068	H3374	H1523	H7461

Additional Cross-References

Philippians 2:12 (Parallel theme): Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

Hebrews 12:25 (Parallel theme): See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven:

Psalms 89:7 (Parallel theme): God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.

Psalms 97:1 (References Lord): The LORD reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof.

Psalms 99:1 (References Lord): The LORD reigneth; let the people tremble: he sitteth between the cherubims; let the earth be moved.