

Psalms 33:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.

Analysis

Following the description of creation by God's word, this verse issues appropriate response: **'Let all the earth fear the LORD'**. The imperative yir'u (fear) indicates reverent awe, not terror—appropriate response to sovereign Creator. This fear combines worship, obedience, and humble submission. Proverbs 9:10 declares, 'The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.' Creation's grandeur should produce creature's humility. If God spoke galaxies into being, how small are we—yet how valued, since this mighty God seeks relationship with us.

The second imperative extends the call: **'let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him'**. The verb gur (stand in awe, tremble, dread) intensifies the response. Every human being—regardless of nation, culture, or religion—should acknowledge Yahweh as Creator and Lord. The universal scope ('all the earth,' 'all inhabitants') anticipates missionary mandate: gospel is for every tribe and tongue. This God isn't tribal deity limited to Israel but sovereign Creator deserving universal worship.

Romans 1:20 explains humanity's accountability: 'The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.' Creation itself testifies to Creator, rendering all humans accountable. Natural revelation doesn't save but condemns—it demonstrates God's existence and power, leaving those who reject Him without excuse. Special revelation (Scripture, Christ)

is needed for salvation, but general revelation (creation) establishes universal obligation to fear and worship Creator.

Historical Context

This verse's universal scope reflects Israel's calling as light to nations (Isaiah 49:6). Though God chose Israel as covenant people, His ultimate purpose was blessing all earth's families through Abraham's seed (Genesis 12:3). The prophets envisioned all nations streaming to Jerusalem to worship Yahweh (Isaiah 2:2-3, Zechariah 8:20-23). This psalm participates in that vision—calling all earth's inhabitants to fear the LORD.

Ancient Near Eastern religions were typically national or regional—each nation had patron gods, with no expectation that foreigners would worship them. Israel's monotheism was radically different—Yahweh alone is God, therefore all humanity should worship Him. This universalism often conflicted with practical nationalism (Jonah's reluctance to preach to Nineveh exemplifies this tension). Yet prophetic vision consistently pointed toward global worship of Yahweh.

Jesus' Great Commission fulfilled this psalm's vision: 'Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost' (Matthew 28:19). Pentecost began gospel's global spread—people from every nation hearing Peter's message (Acts 2:5-11). Paul's missionary journeys carried gospel to Gentiles throughout Roman Empire. Church history records Christianity spreading to every continent. Revelation's vision depicts worshipers 'out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation' (Revelation 5:9).

Contemporary missions continues pursuing this psalm's call—unreached people groups hearing gospel, Bible translation enabling all to read Scripture, global church worshiping Creator in diverse languages and cultures. The psalm's imperative remains urgent: let all earth fear the LORD—a call every generation must obey.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What is the difference between 'fearing' the LORD (reverential awe) and being terrified of God, and why does creation prompt this fear?
2. How does creation's testimony to Creator establish universal human accountability to worship God?
3. What is the relationship between general revelation (creation) and special revelation (Scripture/Christ) in bringing people to saving faith?
4. How does this psalm's universal call ('all the earth') inform Christian missionary obligation and vision?
5. In what ways should believers cultivate appropriate fear/awe of God in an age that emphasizes casual familiarity?

Interlinear Text

יִירָא fear H3372	יְהוָה the LORD H3068	כָּל H3605	הָאָרֶץ Let all the earth H776	מִמֶּנּוּ H4480	יִגְדְּלוּ stand in awe H1481	כָּל H3605
יֹשְׁבֵי י let all the inhabitants H3427		תְּבָלָה of the world H8398				

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 15:4 (References Lord): Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.

Psalms 67:7 (Parallel theme): God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.

Psalms 22:27 (References Lord): All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.

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

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