

Psalm 36:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep: O LORD, thou preservest man and beast.

Analysis

Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep. This verse uses two powerful nature metaphors to express the incomprehensible magnitude of God's attributes. The Hebrew word tsedaqah (צדקה, "righteousness") refers to God's perfect moral character and His faithful adherence to covenant promises. Comparing it to "the great mountains" (hararei El, הרים אל, literally "mountains of God") suggests something majestic, immovable, eternal, and towering above all earthly standards. Ancient mountains were symbols of permanence and divine dwelling places.

The parallel phrase "thy judgments are a great deep" uses mishpatim (משפטים, "judgments") to describe God's decisions, decrees, and providential ordering of events. The "great deep" (tehom rabbah, תהום רעה) echoes the primordial waters of Genesis 1:2, suggesting unfathomable depth and mystery. While God's righteousness is visible and stable like mountains, His judgments often remain mysterious and beyond human comprehension.

O LORD, thou preservest man and beast. This declaration reveals God's universal providence extending to all creatures. The verb yasha (ישע, "preservest") means to save, deliver, or preserve. Despite the incomprehensibility of God's ways, His care is tangible and practical, sustaining all life. This echoes God's covenant with Noah (Genesis 9:9-10) and anticipates Christ's teaching that God feeds the birds and clothes the grass (Matthew 6:26-30). The juxtaposition of transcendent majesty with immanent care reveals the beautiful paradox of biblical theology.

Historical Context

Psalm 36 is a Davidic psalm that contrasts the wicked person's self-deception with God's unfailing love and faithfulness. Ancient Near Eastern peoples often associated mountains with the dwelling places of gods—Mount Olympus for Greeks, Mount Zaphon for Canaanites. David's use of mountain imagery would resonate with his audience while affirming that Israel's God alone possesses true, immovable righteousness.

The concept of the "great deep" (tehom) connects to ancient creation theology and flood narratives. Unlike pagan myths where the deep represented chaos gods to be conquered, Israel understood the deep as God's creation, under His sovereign control. This verse affirms that even the most mysterious aspects of God's providence serve His righteous purposes.

The phrase "man and beast" reflects the comprehensive scope of God's covenant care established in the Noahic covenant (Genesis 9). In an agricultural society dependent on livestock, God's preservation of animals was not merely sentimental but essential for human survival. This verse would comfort Israel during times of drought, famine, or military threat, assuring them that the same God who maintains cosmic order also sustains daily life.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does recognizing God's righteousness as unmovable as mountains affect your trust in Him during moral confusion or injustice?
2. When God's judgments seem unfathomably deep and mysterious, how can you maintain faith in His goodness and wisdom?

3. In what ways does God's care for both humanity and animals challenge modern attitudes toward creation and environmental stewardship?
4. How does this verse's combination of God's transcendent majesty and intimate care shape your prayer life and relationship with Him?
5. What specific situations in your life require you to trust in God's preservation even when His ways seem beyond understanding?

Interlinear Text

בְּ	הַ	תְּהִ	וּמְ	מֵ	שְׁפָטִיםְ	תְּ	אֵ	לְ	כְּבָרְיִ	כְּדִקְתָּבְ	אֵ
Thy	righteousness	mountains	is like the	great	thy judgments	deep	are a	great			
H6666		H2042		H410	H4941	H8415		H7227			
man	and beast	thou preservest	O	LORD							
H120	H929	H3467		H3068							

יהָהָ: תֹּשֶׁׁעַ יְעַבְּדָתְ הַ אֵלֶם

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 77:19 (Parallel theme): Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known.

Psalms 71:19 (Righteousness): Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high, who hast done great things: O God, who is like unto thee!

Romans 11:33 (Judgment): 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!

Isaiah 45:19 (Righteousness): I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I the LORD speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.

Psalms 97:2 (Righteousness): Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.

Psalms 145:9 (References Lord): The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works.

Psalms 92:5 (References Lord): O LORD, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep.

1 Timothy 4:10 (Parallel theme): For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.

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