

Psalms 66:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Come and see the works of God: he is terrible in his doing toward the children of men.

Analysis

Come and see the works of God: he is terrible in his doing toward the children of men. This verse issues an invitation to observe and consider God's mighty acts in history. "Come and see" (lekhu ur'u, לֵכוּ וּרְאוּ) uses two imperatives—come and see. Halakh (הֵלֵךְ) means to go, walk, come. Ra'ah (רָאָה) means to see, look at, perceive, understand. Together they summon people to intentional observation, to deliberate consideration of God's works. This isn't passive glancing but active investigation—coming closer to examine, taking time to perceive and understand.

The invitation echoes Psalm 46:8—"Come, behold the works of the LORD." It also anticipates Jesus's invitation to His first disciples when they asked where He was staying: "Come and see" (John 1:39). Philip used the same words inviting Nathanael to meet Jesus (John 1:46). The phrase invites experiential knowledge, not merely intellectual acknowledgment. One must come closer, observe carefully, engage personally with what God has done. This transforms theology from abstract doctrine to lived encounter with divine reality.

"The works of God" (mifleoth Elohim, מִפְּלֵאוֹת אֱלֹהִים) refers to God's mighty acts—His extraordinary deeds in creation and redemption. Mif'alot are wonderful works, extraordinary acts beyond human capacity. These include creation itself (Psalm 8:3), the exodus and Red Sea crossing (referenced in v.6), victories over enemies, answered prayers, and redemptive interventions throughout history. God isn't distant abstraction but actively engaged in human affairs, performing works that

reveal His character, power, and purposes.

"He is terrible in his doing" (nora alilah, נורא וְלִילָה) uses nora (נורא), meaning awesome, fearful, terrible—inspiring fear, reverence, and awe. Alilah (וְלִילָה) means deed, action, practice. God's deeds inspire appropriate fear because they demonstrate power beyond human control. This isn't terror that paralyzes but reverential awe that recognizes divine majesty and authority. When God parts seas, defeats armies, judges nations, or delivers His people, proper response is trembling recognition of His overwhelming power.

"Toward the children of men" (al-beney adam, אֶל־בְּנֵי אָדָם) indicates the sphere of God's awesome works—human history and affairs. Beney adam (literally "sons of Adam") emphasizes human frailty and mortality compared to God's eternal power. That the infinite, awesome God acts in human history—delivering, judging, redeeming, guiding—is itself astonishing. The God who speaks galaxies into existence cares about and intervenes in the lives of frail, finite, mortal humans. This should produce both terror (appropriate fear of overwhelming power) and wonder (amazement at condescending grace).

Historical Context

The psalm's call to observe God's works assumes a community that remembered and recounted God's mighty acts. Israel's worship centered on rehearsing salvation history—the patriarchal promises, Egyptian bondage, exodus deliverance, Sinai covenant, wilderness provision, conquest of Canaan, establishment of monarchy, temple dedication. These weren't ancient myths but foundational events shaping national identity. Each generation was instructed to teach the next about God's works (Deuteronomy 6:6-9, Psalm 78:1-8), ensuring continuity of faith based on historical acts, not abstract philosophy.

The specific work referenced in verse 6—"He turned the sea into dry land: they went through the flood on foot: there did we rejoice in him"—points to the exodus, Israel's defining deliverance. This event demonstrated God's power over nature, His faithfulness to covenant promises, and His ability to save His people from impossible circumstances. Every subsequent generation participated in this

memory through Passover celebration, declaring: "We were slaves in Egypt, and the LORD brought us out." This corporate memory created confidence that the God who worked powerfully in the past remains able to act in the present.

The invitation to "come and see" suggests worship involved testimony and recounting of God's works. The Psalms frequently call for declaring God's deeds among the peoples (Psalm 9:11, 96:3, 105:1). This wasn't merely preserving historical information but proclaiming living testimony that the God who acted before acts still. When early Christians proclaimed the gospel, they followed this pattern—recounting Jesus's works, death, and resurrection as historical events demanding response (Acts 2:22-24, 3:12-16, 4:8-12). Christian worship continues this tradition through Scripture reading, testimonies, and sacraments that rehearse God's mighty works in Christ, inviting each generation to "come and see" what God has done.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. What does it mean to 'come and see' God's works rather than merely hearing about them secondhand or acknowledging them intellectually?
2. Which specific works of God in Scripture or in your own experience inspire reverential awe and appropriate fear?
3. How does God being 'terrible' (awesome, fearsome) in His acts balance with understanding His love, grace, and mercy?
4. What is the relationship between fearing God appropriately and trusting Him confidently?
5. How can you cultivate the habit of observing and reflecting on God's works in history, Scripture, and personal experience?

