

Psalms 83:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

That men may know that thou, whose name alone is
JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth.

Analysis

That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth. This magnificent concluding verse declares the ultimate purpose of divine intervention: universal recognition of Yahweh's supreme sovereignty. The phrase "that men may know" (vi-yed'u, וַיֵּדְעוּ) uses the verb yada (יָדָע), meaning deep, experiential knowledge—not mere intellectual acknowledgment but profound understanding that transforms perspective and allegiance.

"Whose name alone is JEHOVAH" (shimcha levadcha Yahweh, שִׁמְחָה לְבַדְּךָ יְהוָה) is exclusive monotheism—there is no other God besides Yahweh. The English "JEHOVAH" represents the tetragrammaton YHWH (יהוה), God's personal, covenant name revealed to Moses (Exodus 3:14-15). This isn't a generic deity but the specific God who made covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; delivered Israel from Egypt; gave the Law at Sinai; and established David's throne. "Alone" (levadcha, לְבַדְּךָ) emphasizes absolute uniqueness—Yahweh has no rivals, no equals, no competitors. All other so-called gods are mere idols.

"The most high over all the earth" (Elyon al-kol-ha-aretz, עֶלְיוֹן אֶל-כָּל-הָאָרֶץ) uses the divine title Elyon (עֶלְיוֹן, "Most High") emphasizing supremacy and transcendence. This title appears first in Genesis 14:18-22 when Melchizedek blessed Abraham by "God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth." Yahweh isn't merely Israel's tribal deity but sovereign over all creation. His authority extends to "all the earth" (kol-ha-aretz, כָּל-הָאָרֶץ)—every nation, people, and power. No realm escapes His

dominion; no authority exceeds His command.

This verse encapsulates biblical theology's central affirmation: Yahweh alone is God, and His universal sovereignty will eventually be recognized by all creation. Though currently challenged by human rebellion and demonic deception, His kingship is absolute. The prayer of Psalm 83 asks God to demonstrate this reality through judgment that compels acknowledgment of His supremacy. When God arises to judge the earth (v. 8), all pretenders to deity will be exposed as frauds, and every knee will bow before the one true God.

Historical Context

Monotheism in the Ancient Near East and Eschatological Fulfillment

Ancient Near Eastern culture was polytheistic—nations worshiped pantheons of competing deities, each supposedly controlling different aspects of reality. Military conquest was understood as victory of the conquering nation's gods over the defeated nation's gods. When Assyria conquered Israel or Babylon destroyed Jerusalem, surrounding peoples interpreted this as proof that Ashur or Marduk was superior to Yahweh.

Against this polytheistic worldview, Israel's radical monotheism was revolutionary. Deuteronomy 6:4 declares: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD." Israel's prophets mocked idols as powerless wood and stone (Isaiah 44:9-20), affirmed that Yahweh alone created heaven and earth (Isaiah 45:18), and proclaimed that He controls all nations' destinies (Amos 9:7). Even Israel's defeats weren't divine weakness but God's judgment on Israel's sin—He used pagan nations as instruments of discipline (Isaiah 10:5, Jeremiah 25:9).

Psalm 83:18 anticipates the day when this truth becomes universally acknowledged. Isaiah prophesied: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else" (Isaiah 45:22). Zechariah declared: "And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one" (Zechariah 14:9). These prophecies await eschatological fulfillment when Christ returns and every knee bows to confess Him as Lord

(Philippians 2:10-11).

The New Testament reveals that the name Yahweh now resides in Jesus Christ. He is the "name above every name" (Philippians 2:9), the One who makes the Father known (John 1:18), the exact representation of God's nature (Hebrews 1:3). When the psalm's prayer is finally answered and all people acknowledge that Yahweh alone is Most High over all the earth, they will be acknowledging Jesus as Lord to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:11).

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What does it mean that Yahweh's name "alone" is supreme, and how does this challenge modern religious pluralism?
2. How should the truth that Yahweh is "most high over all the earth" affect Christian engagement with political powers and cultural authorities?
3. In what ways did Jesus reveal the name Yahweh, and how is He the fulfillment of this psalm's prayer for universal recognition of God's sovereignty?
4. What will it look like when all people finally "know" that Yahweh alone is God, and how does this knowledge differ from mere acknowledgment?
5. How should the church's mission reflect the goal of Psalm 83:18—that all nations come to know Yahweh's supremacy?

Interlinear Text

וַיֵּדְעוּ	כִּי	אַתָּה ה'	שְׁמֶךָ	יְהוָה ה'
That men may know	H3588	H859	that thou whose name	alone is JEHOVAH
H3045			H8034	H3068
לְבַדְּךָ	עַל לִי וְ	עַל	כָּל	הָאָרֶץ:
H905	art the most high	H5921	H3605	over all the earth
	H5945			H776

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 6:3 (Parallel theme): And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them.

Psalms 59:13 (Parallel theme): Consume them in wrath, consume them, that they may not be: and let them know that God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth. Selah.

Psalms 97:9 (Parallel theme): For thou, LORD, art high above all the earth: thou art exalted far above all gods.

Jeremiah 16:21 (Parallel theme): Therefore, behold, I will this once cause them to know, I will cause them to know mine hand and my might; and they shall know that my name is The LORD.

Ezekiel 38:23 (Parallel theme): Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the LORD.

2 Kings 19:19 (Parallel theme): Now therefore, O LORD our God, I beseech thee, save thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the LORD God, even thou only.

Isaiah 42:8 (Parallel theme): I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.

Ezekiel 30:19 (Parallel theme): Thus will I execute judgments in Egypt: and they shall know that I am the LORD.

Daniel 4:32 (Parallel theme): And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.

1 Kings 18:37 (Parallel theme): Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again.

From KJV Study • kjevstudy.org