

Psalms 88:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead? shall the dead arise and praise thee? Selah.

Analysis

Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead? shall the dead arise and praise thee?

—The psalmist employs rhetorical questions to press God for intervention now, before death makes it too late. The Hebrew "wonders" (נִלְפָּז, *pele*) refers to God's miraculous acts of salvation—but what good are they for the dead? **Shall the dead arise** (יִקְוּמוּ רֵפָאִים, *refaim yakumu*)—The Rephaim were the shades, the weak, shadowy existence of the departed in Sheol, incapable of vigorous praise.

From the Old Testament perspective, death ended active worship. The psalmist essentially argues: "God, if You want praise, You must act while I live!" Yet the New Testament transforms this logic—Christ's resurrection demonstrated that God does show wonders to the dead, that the dead do arise to praise Him. What seemed impossible to Heman became reality in Christ, who "abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10).

Historical Context

This verse reflects the shadowy Old Testament understanding of the afterlife before the full revelation of resurrection. While hints of resurrection appear (Job 19:25-27; Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:2), the dominant Old Testament view saw Sheol as a place of silence and inactivity. Jesus' resurrection radically transformed this understanding.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does the reality of resurrection change the way you view death and suffering?
2. What "wonders" might God be working in your life that you cannot yet see because you are focused only on immediate relief?
3. How should the hope of resurrection affect your prayers for healing and deliverance?

Interlinear Text

הַלֵּמֶת יָם	תַּעֲשֶׂה	פֶּלָא	אִם	יִפְּאֵ יָם	יָקוּ וּמִן	יִדּוּ וְיִשְׁבְּחוּ
to the dead	Wilt thou shew	wonders	H518	shall the dead	arise	and praise
H4191	H6213	H6382		H7496	H6965	H3034
:סֵלָה						
thee Selah						
H5542						

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 6:5 (Parallel theme): For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?

Isaiah 26:19 (Resurrection): Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.

Psalms 30:9 (Resurrection): What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth?

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